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ABSTRACT

This thesis examines opinions of recognized authorities in the teaching of literature regarding the goals of the literature curriculum in achieving the end of producing students who continue to read for pleasure and enrichment once their formal education is completed. Criteria for selecting novels for adolescents include: (1) readability, availability, and typicality, (2) high interest level, and (3) a recognizable standard of literary quality. Annotated bibliographies of books meeting these criteria are divided into ten major subject categories: personal problems, social problems, adventure, animal stories, historical novels, science fiction, mystery, romance, sports stories, and car stories. (LL)

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NOVELS FOR CLASS STUDY IN JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL: SOME RECOMMENDATIONS

Jean Culp Flanigan

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NOVELS FOR CLASS STUDY IN JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL: SOME RECOMMENDATIONS

Jean Culp Flanigan

A Thesis

Submitted to

the Graduate Faculty of

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Degree of

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Auburn, Alabama

March 15, 1973

NOVELS FOR CLASS STUDY IN JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL:

SOME RECOMMENDATIONS

Jean Culp Flanigan

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VITA

Jean Culp Flanigan, daughter of Delos P. and Martha (Street) Culp, was born in Clanton, Alabama, on February 9, 1944. She was educated in the public schools of Alabama, graduating from Livingston High School, Livingston, Alabama, in May, 1961. She attended Livingston University, Birmingham-Southern College, and Auburn University, where she received the degree of Bachelor of Science in August, 1964. She taught English for three years in the public schools of Alabama and Connecticut, and was employed for two years as school representative by Southern Bell Telephone Company in Anniston, Alabama. In June, 1968, she entered Auburn University, where she served as a graduate assistant in secondary education. She was married to William McIver Flanigan in 1963, and has one son, Stephen McIver, two years of age.

THESIS ABSTRACT

NOVELS FOR CLASS STUDY IN JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL:

SOME RECOMMENDATIONS

Jean Culp Flanigan

Master of Science, March 15, 1973
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Research on the reading habits of adults indicates that literature programs in the secondary schools have not been successful in instilling a lifelong love of reading in the majority of students. This thesis examines opinions of recognized authorities in the teaching of literature regarding the goals of the literature curriculum in achieving the end of producing students who continue to read for pleasure and enrichment once their formal education is completed. Dealing specifically with the study of the novel at the junior high school level, a number of novels are recommended which offer a maximum of interest and literary value for junior high school students.

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I. INTRODUCTION

Background

In recent years one of the most frequently stated goals of the teaching of literature has been to instill a love of literature as "a source of inexhaustible delight."[1] One authority has stated,

> More than anything else, our aim as literature teachers must be to make the reading of literature a delightful experience for our students. . . . If we can, indeed, make reading a delightful experience for students, other things will follow. They will continue to read, and in the process they will increase their sensitivity to literature, to themselves, and to the world around them. Pleasant experiences have a way of inducing us to come back for more.[2]

This goal has not been met, nor has satisfactory progress been made toward it during past decades of increased resources for education, including improved teacher preparation. Studies have shown that very few students turn to literature for the pleasure it affords once their schooling is over.[3] Surveys indicate that while between 60 and 70 per cent of the adult population read at least one magazine regularly, and as many as 90 per cent are regular newspaper readers, no more than 30

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[1]Paul Farmer, "Literature Goals: Myth or Reality?," English Journal, LVI (March, 1967), p. 457.

[2]Jerry L. Walker, "Fostering Literary Appreciation in Junior High School," English Journal, LV (December, 1966), p. 1157.

[3]Lester Asheim, "What Do Adults Read?," Adult Reading, Fifty-fifth Yearbook of the National Society for the Study of Education, Part II, ed. by Nelson B. Henry (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1956), p. 22.

per cent are likely to read one book a month.[4] Research concerning the use of public libraries paints an even bleaker picture of the reading habits of the products of our literature curriculum. For example:

> Not only is reading the occupation of a small segment of the population but serious and continued reading is limited to a smaller segment within that one. This is most clearly shown in the figures we have for library use. About 25 per cent of the adult population of a library community is registered with the public library, but actually only about 18 per cent use the library at least once a year, and only about 10 per cent use it as often as once a month. This concentration of library use is typical of reading activity generally; it is probably safe to say--borrowing figures from library studies--that about three-fourths of the books that are read are read by less than 5 per cent of the adult population.[5]

Existing literature programs have been ineffective not only in engendering an appreciation of the more esoteric forms of literature, but also in instilling a lasting love of the form most commonly associated with reading for pleasure, the novel.

Factors other than the school literature program, such as the availability af reading material, the family's attitude toward reading, and the competition of other leisure activities also influence the development of a young person's lifelong reading habits.[6] But since the period between the ages of twelve to sixteen appears to be the most critical stage of this development,[7] the importance of the reading curriculum in the secondary grades cannot be overemphasized.

In fact there is much to indicate that the very materials English teachers have used in their attempt to foster a love of literature in

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[4]Ibid., p. 8. [5]Ibid., p. 19.

[6]Wilbur Schramm, "Why Adults Read," Adult Reading, p. 66.

[7]Ibid., p. 88.

students have been a major factor in their students' rejection of literature as a continuing source of pleasure. The basic premise behind the selection of literary works for class study has often been that students will learn to appreciate good literature only by exposure to the great masterpieces, regardless of whether the students find any enjoyment in them at the present. "You may not like it now, but later you will be glad you were exposed to it," has been all too common a cliche in the English classroom.[8] Carlsen cites some comments by adults on their reactions to their high school literature experiences:

> The most detestable literary experience I had was in Junior year English. We spent three long weary months studying Macbeth which was followed by three dull months also combing Paradise Lost in the same ridiculous manner. It was the most frightful example of lazy and uninspiring teaching I have ever seen.
>
> Moving into high schoolalso moved me into the classics. First in line was David Copperfield which I thoroughly detested and because of this book, I took a hearty dislike to Charles Dickens. Books you had to read were the worst kind.
>
> . . . . . .
>
> English teachers who insisted on memorization of parts of the "Ancient Mariner" or that I get the meaning of Shakespeare or Addison began to bore and irritate me to the point that I almost came to believe that the great works of literature were creations devised by authors for the sole purpose of torturing young students. Most of the fun and sense of wonder that I had felt for reading earlier had deserted me.[9]

Another authority says that forcing even intellectually gifted adolescents to read books which they are not prepared to understand can produce unhappy influences on the youngsters' attitudes toward reading.

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[8]G. Robert Carlsen, "For Everything There Is a Season," Top of the News, XXI (January, 1965), pp. 104-105.

[9]Ibid., p. 104.

> . . . Some of the pupils develop a lifelong distaste for reading. All of them miss good books about characters of their own age because they are trying to read beyond their years, and they are deprived of the insights such books can open up to them on problems they face at the moment. Furthermore, they think they have "read" these mature books and will resent the suggestion that they read them again in later years.[10]

Reversing the failure of literature programs to encourage students to read can be effected more readily by changing the literary selections used than by changing the teaching methods.[11] Teachers of English should, therefore, reconsider the principles guiding the selection of books for study in the secondary grades.

Since the adolescent years are the period in which a young person develops from a child into an adult, literature for this age group should reflect this growth and change. Books for the adolescent reader should be selected from "those children's stories most mature in concept and style, children's books of information not too juvenile in subject matter and presentation; books, both fiction and non-fiction, written for the teen-aged; and adult books, both fiction and non-fiction, which are appealing and within the comprehension of young people."[12]

Teachers need to distinguish between teaching a book and teaching how to read a book. If students are taught to develop their reading skills with literature which is meaningful and interesting to them at

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[10]Dora V. Smith, "Developing a Love of Good Reading," Perspectives on English: Essays to Honor W. Wilbur Hatfield, ed. by Robert C. Pooley, National Council of Teachers of English (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, Inc., 1960), p. 176.

[11]George W. Norvell, "Watchman, What of Literature in Our Schools?," English Journal, LII (September, 1963), p. 435.

[12]Geneva R. Hanna and Mariana K. McAllister, Books, Young People, and Reading Guidance (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1960), p. 12.

the moment, their literary tastes are likely to mature and expand to such a plane that more of them can eventually read with pleasure the "classics" which they currently find so distasteful.[13]

Since the most critical period in the development of lifetime reading habits seems to fall between the ages of twelve and sixteen, an extra responsibility is placed on English teachers in the junior high school grades. It is at this level that students must begin to develop the skills and habits that will prepare them for a lifetime of pleasurable reading. And if such a goal is to be met, it must be done with literature which is relevant and entertaining to them now, and not through the drudgery of such books as Great Expectations or A Tale of Two Cities.

Statement of the Problem

Because of the critical importance of the junior high literature program in the formation of reading habits and because of the novel's particular appeal as the form of literature most commonly associated with leisure reading, the study of the novel in junior high school was chosen as the subject of this paper. The major purpose of this study is the identification and analysis of a number of novels which are both relevant and interesting to today's junior high school students and which are of sufficient literary merit to be worthy of class study for the purpose of developing more mature reading skills.

Two key terms, somewhat related and sometimes overlapping, require definition to avoid confusion. The first, "junior novel," is the more

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[13]Walter Loban, Margaret Ryan, and James R. Squire, Teaching Language and Literature, Grades Seven-Twelve, (2nd ed., New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, Inc., 1969), pp. 439-443.

specific. For the purpose of this study it is defined as

> an extended piece of prose fiction written for adolescents which has known adolescent activities or interests as central elements of the plot. It pretends to treat life truthfully.[14]

The second term is much broader. "Adolescent literature" or "literature for adolescents"

> refers, first, to the rather substantial and highly important body of literature produced by predominantly serious writers specifically for the audience aged from about twelve to about seventeen, in other words principally junior and senior high school students. Second, it refers to that adult literature which has particular relevance to the adolescent and particular significance to the aims of literature teaching in the secondary school.[15]

Delimitations

A wide range of authoritative opinion on the previously stated questions was sought and is reported in the following chapters. In an attempt to keep the data as current as possible, reference material for the most part was limited to books and articles published within the past fifteen years. Exceptions were works cited in recent sources as being particularly authoritative in certain fields.

No attempt was made to use mathematical models or statistical methods to support the conclusions of the study. Rather, reliance was placed on the subjective opinions of recognized authorities to support the critical judgment of the author.

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[14]Arthur Stephenson Dunning, "A Definition of the Role of the Junior Novel Based on Analyses of Thirty Selected Novels," (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Florida State University, 1959), p. 61.

[15]Dwight L. Burton, Literature Study in the High School, (3rd ed., New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc., 1970), p. 237.

The field of novels from which the final selections were made was extensive, though by no means all-inclusive. Likewise, the recommended novels analyzed in this study do not encompass all of the novels suitable for study at the junior high school level. Since the immediate relevance of subject matter and theme was a consideration in the selection of these novels, the list should not be regarded as timeless. Each year may require deletion, substitution, and addition to maintain reading appeal.

For reasons of feasibility, many special teaching problems were not considered in this study. No attempt was made, for example, to deal with the problem of choosing material for atypical students.

Study Procedures

Methods for choosing books

The methods used for gathering the field of novels from which the final selections were made were those which would be readily available to any English teacher. For reasons of practicality the field was limited to those books currently available in paperback edition. A list was made of books recommended by librarians with whom the writer was personally acquainted, by authors of books and journal articles on the subject of the study of the novel in the junior high grades, and by reviewers in various periodicals. The final selections were necessarily subjective, based on the considerations described in Chapter III.

Analysis

Analysis of the problem was based on the following considerations:

1. What specific purpose should the junior high school literature program seek to accomplish within the larger framework of the entire literature program?

2. What role does the study of the novel play in accomplishing that purpose?

3. What are the skills of a mature reader?

4. Which of these skills can and should be taught at the junior high school level?

5. What are the major reading likes and dislikes of junior high school students?

6. What features of a novel should be considered in determining whether a novel is of sufficient literary value to be worthy of intensive in-class study?

7. What are the characteristics of a novel that would best meet both the entertainment and educational needs of the junior high school student?

8. What are some of the specific novels which are best suited for in-class study at the junior high school level today?

II. A REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

The Literature Program

In the past thirty years the high school curriculum has been influenced by a number of markedly different philosophies concerning the study of literature. In the late 1930's and early 1940's, when the emphasis was on "practicality and immediacy," literature was not considered very important. It was deemphasized and sometimes omitted from the curriculum altogether. During the succeeding period, literature was regarded as "a moral guide to life," and the primary emphasis was on theme and idea. The reaction to this period came with the influence of the "New Criticism" on the high school curriculum.

> . . . Now literature was made a discipline and there was much emphasis on 'close reading' of individual works. . . . Fear of 'going outside the text' frequently resulted in overconcern with technique and often students groaned under the process of meticulously picking selections apart.[1]

Articles in professional publications reflect an increasing dissatisfaction with the manner in which literature is taught in most schools today. For example, one writer states that with the traditional literature program

> . . . we drive more children away from a valid use of literature as a life-resource than we attract to it. We may not damage significantly those youngsters who in their home environments have already taken to literature. We may bore them, but we may also help them in technical ways. Anyway, they will go on. But most of the others we stop cold in their

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[1] Burton, Literature Study in the High Schools, pp. 4-5.

> tracks. Literature is not part of their lives. They may never have seen either parent read a book. When, then, the first samples they encounter turn out to be, for them, dull, boring, meaningless, and incomprehensible, that's it, brother! They go away and probably never come back.[2]

Response concept of literature study

Partly because of such dissatisfaction, leading experts in the field are advocating a new approach to the teaching of literature. The 1966 Dartmouth Conference was largely responsible for formulating the concept "of English as consisting principally of experience and involvement." Applying this concept directly to the literature program, the conference asserted that "one does not learn literature, one responds to it, experiences or feels it."[3] James R. Squire quotes from the conference report:

> Response is a word that reminds the teacher that the experience of art is a thing of our own making, an activity in which we are our own interpretative artist. The dryness of schematic analysis of imagery, symbols, myths, structural relations, et al., should be avoided passionately at school and often at college. It is literature, not literary criticism, which is the subject. At the present time, there is too much learning about literature in place of discriminating enjoyment, and many students arrive at and leave universities with an unprofitable distrust of their personal experiences to literature. At the university, as in the secondary school, the explicit analysis of literature should be limited to the least required to get an understanding of the work, within the student's limits, and the aim should be to return as soon as possible to a direct response to the text.[4]

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[2]Fred T. Wilhelms, "English: Liberal Education or Technical Education?," in New English, New Imperatives, ed. by Henry B. Maloney (Champaign, Ill.: National Council of Teachers of English, 1971), p. 64.

[3]Albert H. Markwardt, "Dartmouth and After: Issues in English Language Teaching," in New English, New Imperatives, p. 6.

[4]"Toward a Response-Oriented Curriculum in Literature," in New English, New Imperatives, p. 98.

Although the Dartmouth Conference is usually credited with developing this approach to the literary program, trends in this direction are not uncommon in earlier theories of adolescent reading experts. In 1960 Margaret Early wrote, "Delight is the essence of the work of art itself; the reader can grasp this delight when he has acquired a sensitivity of emotional response that is equal to the demands of the artist's subject and style."[5]

In his excellent resource for anyone concerned with adolescent reading, Books and the Teenage Reader, G. Robert Carlsen emphasizes the importance of pleasure in the literature program: "Enjoyment of what one reads is essential if the individual is to continue to read at an adult level."[6] And as early as 1954 Carlsen asserted that if English teachers approach the organization and content of the literary program with the goal in mind of helping students meet their needs in developing into adults, the reading program will become a richer and more meaningful experience for them.[7]

Sequential pattern of growth

Another area of primary concern among leaders in the field of English education is the sequential development of mature reading habits and interests. One writer warns that "when teachers ignore the natural sequence in the reading interests of adolescents or try to abridge

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[5]"Stages of Growth in Literary Appreciation," The English Journal, XLIX (March, 1960), p. 161.

[6](Revised ed.; New York: Bantam Books, 1971), p. 5.

[7]"Behind Reading Interests," The English Journal, XLII (January, 1954), pp. 11-12.

them, they drive students away from literature rather than lead them to it."[8] Summarizing research in the field, Carlsen says that growth of literary awareness "seems to follow a developmental pattern that remains relatively consistent from individual to individual. . . . So it isn't a matter of what is 'the proper study of literature'--it is what is the proper study of literature at a given stage of one's life."[9]

Margaret Early has described the stages of developing literary appreciation and their implications for the literature program. The process begins with the stage of "unconscious enjoyment." At this stage delight in reading comes easily, without mental struggle. It is an important step because readers "must be convinced that literature affords pleasure" before they are willing to make the effort to achieve enjoyment on a higher plane.[10]

The teacher can foster growth in literary appreciation at this stage by providing "a variety of selections appropriate to the varying maturity and interests of his pupils." He can refrain from analyzing literature to the extent that the delight is gone. "Teachers should remember that a reader of trash has the chance of improving his taste; a nonreading pupil has no taste to improve."[11]

As the reader matures he progresses from the stage of "unconscious delight" to the next stage of "self-conscious appreciation." The reader

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[8]Farmer, "Literature Goals: Myth or Reality?," p. 459.

[9]"The Interest Rate is Rising," The English Journal, LIX (May, 1970), p. 657.

[10]"Stages of Growth in Literary Appreciation," pp. 163-164.

[11]Ibid., p. 164.

now asks why something happened instead of being satisfied with just knowing what happened. Judgment becomes a part of his response to literature.[12] At this stage the teacher's role is to guide students toward the elements of a piece of literature which satisfy the need for a higher level of appreciation. This is the time to begin consideration of setting, characterization, narrative devices, tone, theme, style, etc.[13]

The highest stage of literary appreciation is that of "conscious delight." At this stage, "the reader responds with delight, knows why, chooses discriminatingly, and relies on his own judgment. His reading has range and power." Only a limited number of readers have the capacity for achieving this stage.[14]

She further details some of the characteristics of the adolescent reader:

> Immature readers often have difficulty in maintaining an objective attitude in distinguishing their own ideas from the author's. Their reactions are highly personal, stemming from their own emotions, and unchecked by the weight of the author's words. They tend to express opinions rather than to interpret meanings. This characteristic appears to be related to general reading ability and to intellectual development. It is also related to the development of emotional maturity, through which the individual learns to see himself in relation to others, gains perspective in his vision of himself, and moves from subjective reactions to increasing objectivity. Literature can contribute to this growth; at the same time, insight into literature depends upon sensitiveness in emotional response.[15]

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[12] Ibid., pp. 164-165.

[13] Ibid., p. 166.

[14] Ibid., pp. 166-167.

[15] Ibid., p. 162.

Goals for the literature program

The trend among experts in the teaching of literature, then, is away from the tradition of certain prescribed works which have acquired a reputation of literary greatness and toward a curriculum built around literature which adolescents enjoy and appreciate on their own level. The Oregon curriculum states the basis of such a literature program in this way; "The emphasis in the curriculum is not upon giving the student certain 'facts' about certain works of literature, but rather to provide him with the skill to understand any work of literature."[16]

Robert Small's statement of appropriate goals for the literature curriculum are representative of thinking among current authorities:

> . . . to produce students who (a) enjoy reading works of literature, (b) are prepared to read without further assistance of a teacher other works of literature than those studied, and (c) have a general understanding of the characteristics and standards of quality of the various literary types such as the novel.[17]

James R. Squire sets forth four principles for consideration in establishing a response-oriented literature curriculum:

> 1. The ultimate purpose of literary education in the secondary schools is to deepen and extend the responses of young people to literature of many kinds. . . .
> 2. Response to literature is not passive but active. . . .
> 3. Response to literature is highly personal and is dependent to a considerable degree upon the background of experiences in literature and in life that a reader brings to any literary work. . . .
> . . . . . .
> 4. Response to literature can be affected by methods of approach utilized by the teacher within the classroom.[18]

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[16]The Oregon Curriculum Study Center, A Curriculum in English, Grades 7-12 (Eugene: The University of Oregon, 1965), p. 6.

[17]"Teaching the Junior Novel," The English Journal, LXI (February, 1972), p. 223.

[18]"Toward a Response-Oriented Curriculum," pp. 92-95.

The most frequently mentioned ultimate goal of the literature program is to help students to develop a deep and lasting appreciation of literature. One writer suggests three specific objectives which should be met in order to achieve that goal: (1) "Upgrading students' present reading interests and abilities," (2) "acquainting students with worthwhile current publications," and (3) "showing students what literature offers in pleasure and profit."[19]

Purpose of the junior high school literature curriculum

Referring to Margaret Early's description of the growth of literary appreciation, Dorothy Petitt states that the job of the junior high school English teacher is to heighten the joys of reading for the student who is between the stages of unconscious delight and self-conscious appreciation of literature. His task is to begin the process toward developing the stage of self-conscious appreciation which will continue through the high school years and even into college.[20]

Another authority asserts more specifically that

> . . . the primary emphasis in junior high school reading should be on the pleasure which the student receives from reading. Although the teacher will, of course, have deeper and broader goals for his students, the all-important immediate values of literature to the student must always be kept in mind. These pleasures should, through class discussion, become more intense and, at the same time, more thoughtful. The junior high school student does not wish to analyze extensively, but his teacher can, with properly chosen experiences, start the analytical, evaluative process.[21]

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[19]Royal J. Morsey, Improving English Instruction (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, Inc., 1969), pp. 73-74.

[20]"The Junior Novel in the Classroom," The English Journal, LII (October, 1963), p. 512.

[21]Small, "Teaching the Junior Novel," p. 223.

Jerry Walker offers two very practical ways to determine whether students have appreciated what they have read. They are "(1) to ask the simple question, 'Did you like it?' and (2) to notice what, if anything, they read next."[22]

Reading interests of adolescents

If the primary emphasis of the junior high school literature program is to be the pleasure that can be derived from reading, then the reading interests of adolescents must be a central factor in designing the curriculum.

Much research has been done to determine the specific reading interests of this age group. The following list summarizes some of the most significant information concerning adolescent reading interests that has resulted from these studies:

> 1. The reading interests of boys and girls differ significantly.
> 2. The reading interests of bright, average, and below-average young people tend to be much the same, although the selections they read to satisfy these interests may be different.
> 3. Reading interests change little geographically or historically.
> 4. Young people read primarily for content rather than for style or literary quality.
> 5. Reading interests follow predictable patterns through adolescence.
> 6. Young readers get as much from the rapid reading of a selection as they do from a long and detailed study of it.
> 7. The traditional way of teaching literature has not succeeded in producing adults who are active readers.[23]

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[22]"Fostering Literary Appreciation in Junior High School," p. 1159.

[23]Farmer, "Literature Goals: Myth or Reality?," p. 459.

Sex as an influence on reading interests

George W. Norvell's authoritative study indicates that sex becomes an important factor in the reading interests of young people beginning about the fifth grade and continuing through high school. The difference in reading interests of boys and girls is most acute during the junior high school years.[24] On the basis of this finding, Norvell suggests the following implications concerning the selection of reading materials:

> 1. If children are to be provided with satisfactory materials, reading interests of boys and girls must receive separate consideration.
> 2. Reading materials commonly used in literature classes are better liked by girls than by boys in a ratio of more than two to one. If boys are to be given a fair chance to develop the reading habit, a major revision must be made in the materials studied in school.
> 3. For reading in common, only materials well liked by both boys and girls should be used.[25]

Norvell suggests that factors to look for in selecting reading materials for boys are narration, dominant male characters, adventure, animals, obvious humor, and patriotism. Some factors to be avoided in selecting materials for boys are romantic love, home and family life, and religion. Girls prefer features such as narration, humor, patriotism, mild adventure, animals, sentiment, romantic love, and home and family life in their reading matter.[26]

A more recent study of the reading preferences of boys and girls was done by Mary L. Smith and Isabel V. Eno. They asked 510 students in grades 7-12, "If you could have an author write a story-

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[24]The Reading Interests of Young People, (Boston: D. C. Heath and Co., 1950), p. 48.

[25]Ibid., p. 6. [26]Ibid., pp. 70-71.

to-order for you, what would you have him put in it?" The results are broken down as follows:[27]

Junior High Boys		Senior High Boys	
Mystery	16%	Adventure	46%
Sports	15%	Mystery	25%
Science fiction	15%	Sea stories	25%
Adventure	15%	Comedy	24%
Animal stories	13%	Historical	23%
Sea stories	10%	Science fiction	21%
Junior High Girls		**Senior High Girls**	
Romance	65%	Romance	66%
Mystery	20%	Career	36%
Career	12%	Mystery	32%
Comedy	11%	Adventure	30%
		Comedy	28%

Age as a factor in reading interests

As the results of the Smith and Eno study seem to indicate, age is another significant influence on adolescent reading interests. Carlsen points out that

> . . . those things young people want to read about are related to their chronological age regardless of the level of their reading ability. Therefore, an eighth-grader who has twelfth-grade reading ability does not usually have twelfth-grade reading interests, nor does the one with a fourth-grade reading ability have fourth-grade reading interests.[28]

The reading interests of young people follow a relatively consistent pattern as they mature. In late childhood and early adolescence the reader will turn to the mechanically written juvenile series books, such as the Hardy Boys or Nancy Drew, for escape and

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[27]"What Do They Really Want to Read," The English Journal, L (May, 1966), pp. 343-344.

[28]Books and the Teenage Reader, p. 3.

unconscious delight. Gradually he will turn to the junior novel which attempts to deal truthfully and realistically with the life and problems of the adolescent. Later, at about fifteen, he will become more interested in the popular adult novel, the kind of book that usually makes the best-seller lists but rarely finds its way into the timeless body of great literature. Some readers never move beyond this stage, but those who do find appeal in the modern classics--the best works of such writers as Steinbeck, Hemingway, and Camus. The few who continue to mature in their reading tastes discover pleasure in the few works which have established themselves through generations of readers, but this final stage rarely comes before the middle college years.[29]

Specific preferences of junior high school students

A study involving 4,250 junior high school students and 862 short stories from junior high anthologies revealed some particular reading preferences of students at this level. They were found to prefer (1) descriptions of people to descriptions of places; (2) emphasis on plot rather than on theme; (3) a great deal of physical action; (4) much conflict, both internal and external; (5) suspense; (6) uncomplicated presentation; and (7) a moderate amount of dialogue.[30]

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[29]G. Robert Carlsen, "The Right Size: The Adolescent's Encounters With Literature," Top of the News, XXIII (November, 1966), pp. 61-62.

[30]Ray H. Simpson and Anthony Soares, "Best and Least-Liked Short Stories in Junior High School," The English Journal, LIV (February, 1965), pp. 108-110.

Reading to satisfy personal needs

Not only do young people read for entertainment, they read to fulfill their own personal needs, to learn about life, to find solutions to problems. Carlsen puts it this way:

> If books are to have any meaning, they must be related to the young person's personal and social needs. These needs have been described as tasks which must be accomplished if a person is to grow from a dependent child to an independent adult. The basic tasks which the teenager must undertake are the following:
>
> 1. Discovering his sex's role in our culture. . . .
> 2. Developing new relationships with people his own age. . . .
> 3. Achieving an easy relationship with members of the opposite sex. . . .
> 4. Accepting his physical body. . . .
> 5. Changing his relationship with his parents. . . .
> 6. Working for pay. . . .
> 7. Finding a vocation. . . .
> 8. Becoming aware of his value patterns. . . .[31]

In a similar manner, Hanna and McAllister list the needs of young people which literature can help to satisfy.

> 1. Young people need reassurance that they are normal physically, mentally, emotionally, and socially.
> 2. Young people need opportunities to develop emotional independence from adults.
> 3. Young people need help in solving their problems concerning family relationships.
> 4. Young people need help in establishing their roles as adults, particularly in the area of earning a living and of establishing a home and family.
> 5. Young people need satisfactory relationships with other young people of both sexes.
> 6. Young people need to understand and learn how to control, whenever it is possible, the physical world and the universe.
> 7. Young people need to experience success directly and vicariously.
> 8. Young people need help in developing socially sensitive attitudes and in attaining a degree of socially responsible behavior.

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[31] Books and the Teenage Reader, pp. 10-12.

9. Young people need help in working out a consistent personal philosophy of life.
10. Young people need help in developing an aesthetic appreciation.
11. Young people need opportunities for wholesome fun and relaxation.[32]

Preference for fiction

J. Harlan Shores made a study of the kinds of reading material high school students choose. It revealed that 57 per cent of the students prefer literature to other types of reading matter, and 49 per cent prefer fiction to non-fiction. More students chose novels of various types than short stories, drama or poetry.[33]

Another writer, focusing specifically on junior high school students, says that they rely heavily on the junior novel for their pleasure reading even when they recognize the shortcomings of some of these books, "because they choose books for pleasure largely on the basis of topical content, not on literary quality or style."[34]

A study of books which tenth graders considered "personally significant" further substantiates the preferences adolescents have for the novel. Of the forty-eight resulting titles, thirty-four are novels, only eight of which may be considered "classics." Of the remaining titles, eleven are biography and non-fiction, two are drama, and the Bible completes the list.[35]

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[32]Books, Young People, and Reading Guidance, p. 55.

[33]"Reading Interests and Informational Needs of High School Students," The Reading Teacher, XVII (April, 1964), pp. 537-538.

[34]Ben F. Nelms, "Reading for Pleasure in Junior High School," The English Journal, LV (September, 1966), p. 678.

[35]James R. Squire and Robert K. Applebee, High School English Instruction Today (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1968), p. 105.

The novel in the literature program

Although students show a distinct preference for the novel over any other literary form, English teachers have always faced a number of problems related to class study of the novel. Of a purely practical nature has been the problem of availability of material for classroom use. This difficulty has largely been alleviated in the last few years by the widespread use of paperback books.[36]

More difficult to overcome are the philosophical problems. For years the study of the novel in class has been limited largely to a rather select few works, usually "classics," which teachers feel are "worth teaching," and which they believe will give students uplifting and rewarding experiences with fine literature. This basis for selecting novels for class study often ignores the developmental process by which adolescents achieve reading maturity. "To some extent a rather widespread burden of contempt for the 'juvenile' and the contemporary has crippled the teaching of the novel."[37]

Burton continues,

> Considering the entire literary tradition, it is difficult to defend the position that any two or three novels are the sina qua non of the literary education during adolescence. It is quite obvious that, no matter what may be a teacher's opinion of a particular novel and no matter what position the book has held in literary history, it will be rewarding to a student only in terms of his reactions to it and of the value he perceives in his experience of reading it. It is unfortunately apparent that the majority of high school graduates look back on their tenth-grade experience with Silas Marner, for example, as relatively unpleasant, though the novel has a secure reputation in the literary tradition. . . . A greater permissiveness must characterize choice of selections for classroom use.[38]

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[36]Burton, Literature Study in the High Schools, pp. 74-75.

[37]Ibid., p. 75. [38]Ibid., p. 76.

Developing Skills for Mature Reading

The teacher of literature wants his students to enjoy reading, but wants the level of enjoyment not to remain stationary. In order to deepen and broaden their literary range, the teacher should help his students to develop the skills which enable them to read at levels of gradually increasing maturity.

What is reading maturity?

Literary maturity "implies the ability to differentiate between structural simplicity and structural complexity, the ability to grow toward recognition of the aspects of literary art which separate the shoddy from the successful, the truthful from the untruthful."[39]

Another source points out that while maturity in reading cannot be precisely defined, some characteristics of the mature reader can be identified. First, the mature reader confronts new facts and new ideas with an open mind. He is willing to reconsider his own position in light of new information. A second characteristic is that the mature reader possesses an honest insight into his own capabilities and limitations. He is constantly striving to deepen his level of self-understanding, and reading provides him with a broad level of experience from which to draw knowledge of self. It may also be said that the mature reader has a concern for other people and society as a whole. He tries to understand people who are different from himself and to regard their problems and differences with tolerance and sympathy.[40]

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[39]Dunning, dissertation, p. 119.

[40]Hanna and McAllister, pp. 3-7.

Kinds of responses to reading

At different levels of maturity, the reader may respond to literature in a variety of ways. Arnold Lazarus divides these responses into six basic types.

> 1. Valuing. The student shares his feelings; tells what he accepts, admires, cherishes--or what he rejects--in literature and life.
> 2. Describing. The student identifies and in his own words describes without necessarily defining such literary elements as persons, places, actions, patterns, and rhetorical effects.
> 3. Discovering relationships. The student makes connections (discovers similarities, continuities, reciprocities) between various literary elements; between one work and another; between a literary work and another art form (e.g., in the fine arts, theater arts, and electronic media).
> 4. Discriminating. The student explains significant differences he recognizes or discovers between various literary forms and works: between a literary work and another art form.
> 5. Inferring. The student tells what he has generalized or abstracted (e.g., connotation, suggested meaning, vision of life) from what he has read; or he demonstrates his inferences through role-playing and other oral and written re-creations.
> 6. Evaluating. The student, respecting the right of each art form to its own integrity, tells why he does or does not give high marks to a literary work he has read, or to a version of it he has also experienced in the electronic media, or to a review of either he may have also read.[41]

Difficulties in responding to literature

Most adolescents are not mature readers, and they often have difficulty in forming appropriate responses to the literature they read. James R. Squire studied the reading responses of adolescents, and found six common "sources of difficulty in interpretation":

1. Problems in comprehending the narrative, primarily (a) misunderstanding of key words, (b) failure "to grasp the implications of details

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[41] "Performance Objectives in Reading and Responding to Literature," The English Journal, LXI (January, 1972), p. 53.

presented by the author," and (c) making incorrect inferences from details in the story. Adolescents with these difficulties were characterized by an unwillingness to admit they had problems in comprehension and by clinging to their incorrect interpretations.

2. "Reliance on stock responses." Five common themes of these responses were,

(a) "Adolescents are not responsible for their own actions."

(b) "A boy or girl in trouble doesn't have a very healthy home life."

(c) "Wealth and happiness are incompatible."

(d) "When adults and adolescents are in conflict, the adults are almost always wrong."

(e) "Punishment for adolescent wrongdoing accomplishes little and should be avoided."

3. Distortion because of "their demands for fairy tale solutions and . . . their frequent unwillingness to face the realities of unpleasant interpretation."

4. A tendency to "prejudge a selection according to the presence or absence of a certain feature," such as physical description.

5. Irrelevant associations with personal experiences or with incidents in other stories, movies, or television programs.

6. Insistence "on clarity and definiteness in interpretation even when clues in the story are fragmentary and minimal."[42]

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[42]The Responses of Adolescents While Reading Four Short Stories (Champaign, Ill.: National Council of Teachers of English, 1964), pp. 37-49.

General skills necessary for mature reading

In order to become mature readers, adolescents must be helped to overcome their difficulties in interpretation by developing the skills necessary for a full response to literature. Most of the skills important to a total reading experience fall into three categories:

(1) Those needed to perceive the beauty in form that closely parallels content: the author's selection of media; his uses of rhythm and balance; the interrelationship of setting, tone, and point of view.
(2) Those needed to perceive development: the structure of the narrative, the logic of the characterization, the relationship of incidents and theme.
(3) Those needed to explore meanings below the surface: the basic theme, the connotative effect of words, the use of imagery, the signs and symbols, the satire and irony, the underlying myth or archtype.[43]

Some important attitudes toward reading that students should be helped to develop are "responding with genuineness, suspending judgment, weighing evidence objectively, searching for several meanings, and fusing intellectual and emotional reactions."[44]

Skills for reading the novel

Dwight Burton describes three basic skills necessary for a full reading experience of a novel. He sees the skills as developing progressively, one building on another. The first skill which needs to be developed in intensive study of the novel is the ability of the reader to enter the work imaginatively—to bring his own experiences and emotions to bear on the experiences and emotions of the book. If students are to grasp meaning in a novel, they must next learn to

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[43]Loban, Ryan, and Squire, Teaching Language and Literature, p. 444.

[44]Ibid.

"hypothesize" as they read. They must learn to consider the purpose of each event in a book as it is encountered, and then to reexamine it in relation to the work as a whole. After the student is practiced in the skills necessary for imaginative entry and perception of meaning, he can begin to judge the artistic unity and significance of the work, considering such questions as: "Is it true to life? . . . Were the characters real? Was the plot improbable? Was the author skillful in description?"[45]

Specific points of emphasis for class study of the novel in junior high school

Obviously, if the teacher recognizes the natural pattern of literary development, he cannot expect his students to learn all of these skills at once. The process of development must be gradual, beginning in junior high school and continuing through the high school grades.

Concerning the skills which should be taught in the junior high school grades, Burton says,

> In the junior high school the students can learn the various purposes that fiction may have: simply to entertain through a funny, exciting, or unusual story; to satirize or burlesque something; to create some kind of effect or impression; to present an insight into a person's character.[46]

The junior high school teacher can also begin instructing his students in some of the basic structural and stylistic elements of the novel, such as character development, plot, setting, and even symbolism.

Before students can be asked to "characterize," they must be taught to recognize the clues an author uses in developing a character.

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[45] Literature Study in the High Schools, pp. 81-87.

[46] Ibid., p. 70.

To introduce the study of character development the teacher might ask,

> . . . "How do we arrive at our judgments of people in real life?" Students will usually answer this question with such responses as: "By the way they act." "By what they do." "By what other people say about them." "By the way they talk." "By the way they dress." "By the kinds of things they like to do." Then the teacher can point out that in fiction one arrives at estimation of character through the same kinds of clues.[47]

J. N. Hook's list of the nine basic methods of revealing a character can also be helpful:

1. Telling what kind of person he is
2. Describing the person, his clothing, his environment
3. Showing his actions
4. Letting him talk
5. Relating his thoughts
6. Showing how other people talk to him
7. Showing what other people say about him
8. Showing how other people react because of him
9. Showing how he reacts to others[48]

The study of plot should help the student develop more mature discrimination in his reading. He should learn to recognize that in good fiction, as in life, events are usually founded on a cause and effect basis. "A good study question for students is: 'Was there any preparation for this happening, any reason for it in what has gone before, or did this happen purely by chance or coincidence?'" Proper guidance in studying plot should help the student to reach a level of maturity in reading at which he can recognize and reject poor literature in which coincidence plays too great a role.[49]

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[47] Ibid., pp. 71-72.

[48] The Teaching of High School English (New York: The Ronald Press Company, 1959), pp. 179-180.

[49] Burton, Literature Study in the High Schools, p. 71.

Study of setting at the junior high school level should serve as a basis for later study. Fiction for this age level should have an explicitly stated setting or obvious clues to setting. Training in recognizing the obvious clues as to the time and place of a story will pave the way for interpreting more subtle clues later on.[50]

Symbolism in literature is often a very difficult matter for the adolescent to understand. The concept of symbolism should be introduced in junior high school, but it should be kept at a very simple level and expanded very gradually.[51]

But in teaching the various elements of the novel, the teacher must always be careful not to put too much emphasis on reactions to parts of a story so that students lose sight of the relationship of the parts to the whole.[52]

The Role of the Junior Novel in the Classroom

In selecting novels for class study, the English teacher must find those which appeal to the interests of his students, which are not beyond their level of reading skills, and which offer an opportunity to broaden those skills. For the junior high grades, especially, the better junior novels may offer such material.

Limitations of the young reader

The author of a novel written especially for the young adolescent must recognize that his reading audience is limited both in the experience

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[50] Ibid., p. 72 [51] Ibid., pp. 72-74.

[52] Squire, The Responses of Adolescents While Reading Four Short Stories, pp. 54-55.

and skills that adult readers may possess. He must limit his work accordingly.

Because children lack an adult experience of life, they have difficulty in comprehending some adult experiences. Likewise they often cannot understand an adult's view of children's experiences. Also related to the child's limited experience of life is the fact that the young reader is involved daily with problems and interests which no longer concern the adult. Therefore good children's literature should deal with matters within the range of experience of the young reader and should be told from a view point with which he can identify.[53]

The child's attention span and his ability to jump from one thread of a story to another are usually not as developed as in the adult reader. Therefore books for young people are often shorter than adult books, and the plots are less complex.[54]

Another way in which the young reader is often more limited than the adult reader is that his vocabulary is smaller. Because the writer of books for young people must keep his language at a level suitable for his reader, he does not have the freedom and flexibility of style that an author of adult literature has.[55]

Characteristics of the junior novel

In Chapter I, the junior novel is defined as "an extended piece of prose fiction written for adolescents which has known adolescent activities or interests as central elements of the plot. It pretends to treat

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[53]James Steel Smith, A Critical Approach to Children's Literature (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1967), pp. 15-18.

[54]Ibid., p. 19. [55]Ibid., pp. 18-19.

life truthfully." It is now necessary to examine some of the more specific characteristics of this special genre.

Hanna and McAllister state succinctly that "the junior novel is less lengthy and less complex than the adult novel and is concerned with adolescent characters and their problems."[56] Other writers examine the type in more detail.

Most junior novels are similar in structure and technique. They are shorter than the average novel, and the action is usually limited to a relatively short span of time. "Generally, plots are straightforward and on a single plane, building to a climax near the end of the book and giving a very brief wrap-up. . . ." The style is simple and easy to read, and the point of view is usually omniscient.[57]

In 1959, Dunning identified a number of characteristics "suggested by the careful reading of thirty popular junior novels.":

1. Authors of junior novels mirror adolescents' interests accurately. . . .
. . . . . .
2. Maturity--or growing up--is typical thematic concern.
. . . . . .
3. Junior novels consistently avoid taboo concerns. . . .
. . . . . .
4. Junior novels are typically concerned with socially and economically fortunate families. . . .
. . . . . .
5. Didacticism is a characteristic of the junior novel.[58]

In another study, the books of six very popular authors of junior novels[59] were examined to try to find the formula of their construction.

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[56]Books, Young People, and Reading Guidance, p. 22.

[57]Burton, Literature Study in the High Schools, p. 250.

[58]Dissertation, pp. 315-321.

[59]The authors are Betty Cavanna, Anne Emery, Henry Gregor Felsen, Mary Stolz, James L. Summers, and John Tunis.

Four characteristic elements were identified: "type of situation, pattern of action, character roles and relationships, and setting."[60]

The aspect found to have changed most in recent years was the situation which forms the basis for the plot. The most recent junior novels tend to deal with social and moral problems such as teenage marriage, racial tension, drug addiction, and anti-war protest, while junior novels of the 1940's and 1950's were primarily concerned with dating, school, and family problems.[61]

Martinec outlines the pattern of action, which she found unchanged over the years, as follows:

1. After the introduction of the protagonist, the problem is dramatized by a brief episode, and then explicitly stated by an intrusion of the omniscient author.
2. Although the protagonist has managed to function adequately up to a point, now some event destroys the precarious equilibrium and precipitates a crisis.
3. The protagonist reacts with increasing frustration, refusing to heed the advice of wiser characters, and instead of approaching the solution of the problem, seemingly getting further and further away from it.
4. Just as a point of absolute hopelessness seems to have been reached, an accident, coincidence, or the sudden intervention of a "transcendent" character brings illumination and insight to the beleagured protagonist.
5. The problem is solved by the protagonist and appropriate action is taken.[62]

There are four major elements among the characters: "the teenage protagonist, the peer group, adults (parents and teachers), and the transcendent character, who may be either a teenager or an adult."[63]

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[60]Barbara Martinec, "Popular--But Not Just a Part of the Crowd: Implications of Formula Fiction for Teenagers," The English Journal, LX (March, 1971), p. 340.

[61]Ibid., p. 341

[62]Ibid., pp. 341-342.

[63]Ibid., p. 342.

Since the 1950's the protagonist has usually been

> . . . one who faces a seemingly insoluble personal problem that threatens to blight his entire life. The story is usually told from the viewpoint of this character, with frequent comments by an omniscient author to fill in the gaps. The usual age of the protagonist is seventeen (just older than the age group for whom the book is intended). In spite of his immaturity and personal defects, the protagonist is usually good-looking (but doesn't realize it) and possesses some unusual talent for art, music, writing, sports, or group leadership.[64]

Martinec found the most important relationship between characters to be that of the protagonist to the peer group. She describes the relationship thus:

> The protagonist is usually an outsider trying desperately to break into a choice clique. But though the protagonist wants to be accepted by his peers, this attitude is somewhat ambivalent, since part of him enjoys being set apart from the group. . . . If this "loner" has a close friend, it is another social outcast rather than a truly compatible companion. There is, however, almost always another teenager of the same sex who functions as a rival. In a sizable number of stories, the rival teenager also functions as the transcendent character, providing the advice which brings the illumination. Usually after this climax, the protagonist and the former rival become bosom friends. The resolution of the protagonist's problem always brings him into closer and more harmonious contact with the peer group, where he generally emerges as a leader. The old "outsider" friend may well be left behind, an example of what happens to those who do not "mature" enough to move into the group.[65]

Adults normally remain on the sidelines of the action. "Parents and teachers are usually depicted as wise and benevolent but rather remote. Though they have the answers that the teenager is seeking, parents are unable to communicate their knowledge."[66]

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[64] Ibid., pp. 342-343. [65] Ibid., p. 343. [66] Ibid.

The three basic settings for the junior novel are

> . . . home, school and the "hangout," in order of importance. The home is usually middle or upper-middle class, suburban or small town rather than urban, though recently some experiments have been made with lower class backgrounds. . . . However, although the family's economic status may vary, the middle class outlook of the protagonist remains.[67]

In another type of study, James E. Davis investigated research dealing with the characteristics of the novel up to 1959, and selected junior novels written since then in order to compare and contrast them. He found three major similarities:

1. Sentence structure used in junior novels is still predominantly simple and compound sentences.

2. Didacticism is still quite apparent in most junior novels.

3. Junior novels still deal primarily with the problems, interests, and activities of adolescents, but new concerns have been treated in recent years.[68]

He identifies even more differences between the older and more recent junior novels:

1. The current trend is toward a more honest treatment of life. Success is rarely achieved easily.

2. There is more variation in ages of the main characters in the more recent junior novels. While most junior novels have teenage protagonists, many of those written since 1959 have as the major characters younger children and adults.

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[67] Ibid., pp. 343-344.

[68] "Recent Trends in Fiction for Adolescents," The English Journal, LVI (May, 1967), pp. 720-723.

3. The trend in recent junior novels seems to be away from emphasis on the values of the upper-middle class. Many deal with the lives of the working class and the economically disadvantaged.

4. The traditional taboos of sex and profanity are not so rigidly observed in junior novels written since 1959.

5. The omniscient point of view is still predominant, but there is much more use of shifting point of view and intimate first person.[69]

Carlsen describes the qualities which characterize the best of the novels written for adolescents:

> Adolescence is never satirized nor glorified. It is shown as the adolescent himself sees it. The books that are successful with the young reader are generally told from the personal viewpoint of one character rather than in the objective third person. They detail what it feels like to be ashamed of one's parents, to be afraid in a crowd, to be lonely and on the sidelines, to be pushed to the limits of one's physical endurance in a sports event and fail, to enter a contest and be only second best. In other words, the book that is psychologically oriented in its dominant plot line outlives the one that simply tells what happened.[70]

Opposition to class study of the junior novel

Although the junior novel has been accepted by teachers and librarians for students' leisure reading or "organized 'individual reading programs,'" it is seldom used for study in the classroom, "probably because English teachers are convinced that it is their function, among others, to introduce students to the so-called 'classic' . . . works of literature and thereby, to raise the students' literary standards."[71]

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[69] Ibid., pp. 721-723.

[70] Books and the Teenage Reader, p. 44.

[71] Small, "Teaching the Junior Novel," p. 222.

The Commission on English voiced such an attitude in its condemnation of the inclusion of adolescent literature in the curriculum:

> For classes in remedial reading a resort to such books may be necessary, but to make them a considerable part of the curriculum for most students is to subvert the purposes for which literature is included in the first place. In the high school years, the aim should be not to find the students' level so much as to raise it, and such books rarely elevate. For college-bound students, particularly, no such concessions as they imply are justified. Maturity of thought, vocabulary, syntax, and construction is the criterion of excellence in literature, and that criterion must not be abandoned for apparent expediency. The competent teacher can bridge the distances between good books and the immaturity of his students; that is, in fact, his primary duty as a teacher of literature.[72]

Support for class study of the junior novel

More and more English educators are advocating the classroom use of adolescent literature as a transition from children's literature to adult literature. This transition literature provides an opportunity for developing the skills necessary for reading mature works while satisfying the needs and interests of the adolescent.[73]

One specialist says that the junior novel is a useful tool in helping students make the transition from casual reading to critical study of literature. The conventional structure of these novels makes it easier for the young adolescent reader to learn about such aspects of the novel as character development and conflict.[74] Another describes the junior novel as a "simple but working model of the adult or

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[72]Freedom and Discipline in English, Report of the Commission on English (New York: College Entrance Examination Board, 1965), p. 49.

[73]Burton, Literature Study in the High Schools, p. 239.

[74]John Simmons, "The Teaching of Literature in the Junior High School," The High School Journal, LII (April, 1969), pp. 367-368.

classic novel" which can be used to help young readers learn the skills necessary to deal with the complexities of the adult novel.[75]

Dorothy Petitt makes several points in favor of the junior novel for class study:

1. It can be unified.
2. It can develop one facet of the general theme of fiction: the individual in society. In the development the author does not allow didactic social or psychological viewpoints to overshadow the characterization of the individual.
3. It can have a plot linking inner and outer experiences, not only telling what happened, but also showing why it happened.
4. It can have at least one fully developed, one round character, who further develops in the course of events.
5. Descriptions can be functional and also simply and economically written. Such descriptions partake intrinsically of character and event rather than exist seemingly for the sake of the author's pleasure in writing them.
6. The structure and rhythm of sentences can also be an organic part of the total meaning of the novel.
7. The metaphor can be fresh, unhackneyed.
8. The tone can be the product of language which does not demand of the reader an emotional response in excess of the situations, characters, and events depicted.[76]

Two significant studies have dealt with the effectiveness of the junior novel in achieving some of the teaching goals of the literature program. In the first study, the purpose was

> . . . to determine whether there would be a significant difference between the novel reading ability of tenth grade students who had been taught Silas Marner, a major adult work, and tenth grade students who had been taught Swiftwater, a superior junior novel. . . .
>
> The main conclusion was that neither the study of Silas Marner nor the study of Swiftwater had a significant bearing on the ability of students to read the novel, as measured by a test on a third novel, The Pearl. . . .

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[75]Small, "Teaching the Junior Novel," p. 224.

[76]"The Junior Novel in the Classroom," pp. 513-514.

> Two points of curricular significance were made: (1) probably no single novel is indispensable in training students to read novels, (2) the common practice of limiting novel study to the narrow, intensive study of a single novel in the tenth grade is open to question.[77]

One of the purposes of another study was to determine whether there was "a differential effect of the reading and discussion of three junior novels, or of three adult novels, on student attitude toward the novel ideally."[78] The major conclusion was that "the reading and discussion of the three junior novels brought the students' attitude toward the ideal novel closer toward the experts' attitude toward the ideal novel than did the reading and discussion of the three adult novels."[79]

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[77]William Howard Evans, "A Comparison of the Effects of a Superior Junior Novel and Silas Marner on the Ability of Tenth Grade Students to Read the Novel" (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Florida State University, 1961), in Dissertation Abstracts, XXII, pp. 2715-2716.

[78]Nathan S. Blount, "The Effects of Selected Junior Novels on Student Attitudes Toward the 'Ideal' Novel" (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Florida State University, 1963), p. 17. Novels used in the study were The Sea Gulls Woke Me, Street Rod, Swiftwater, Ivanhoe, The Red Badge of Courage, and Silas Marner.

[79]Ibid., p. 79.

III. CRITERIA FOR SELECTING NOVELS FOR CLASS STUDY IN JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOLS

The selection of novels for study by a particular class must be made by the teacher of that class on the basis of his knowledge of the students' individual reading interests and abilities, the skills which he feels his students need to develop, and to a certain extent, the social climate surrounding the school. The recommendations in this study are intended to familiarize the person concerned with adolescent reading with some of the readily available books suitable for class study in grades seven through nine.

General criteria

Novels discussed in the following chapter may be described as adolescent literature. They are junior novels, written especially for adolescents, or adult novels with appeal for the young reader.

The role of the literature program in junior high school is to help students make the transition from the stage of unconscious delight in reading to the self-conscious appreciation of literature.[1] According to Dwight Burton, literature to be studied during this transition phase should (1) "be easy to read;" (2) "reflect experience compatible with the nature of the reader;" (3) "not grossly distort experience;" (4) "have action, suspense, danger, romance;" and (5) "be available."[2]

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[1]Dorothy Petitt, "The Junior Novel in the Classroom," p. 512.

[2]Literature Study in the High Schools, p. 243.

Some specific considerations must be made when choosing a book for a group of students rather than for an individual reader. Burton lists three criteria for selecting books for reading in common:

> 1. Any novel chosen should provide appropriate opportunities for the able without being either completely incomprehensible or unrewarding to those at the lower range of ability.
> 2. The work chosen should pose reading problems and demands that are, in large part, common to many other novels. That is, the unique or greatly experimental work might legitimately be ruled out for total class study. . . .
> 3. The novel must have some natural affinity with youth, with adolescence. . . . There are certain themes, attitudes, mind-sets that are naturally more acceptable or comprehensible than others to young people. A work must be appraised carefully in terms of a given class for entering imaginatively into it and responding to it.[3]

Dorothy Petitt's recommendations for choosing a novel for class study are similar to those of Burton. She states that the content of the novel should have a strong appeal to the students, that "the novel should be readable," and that it "should have immediate literal meaning for the junior high school reader," while at the same time offering some depth for study.[4]

The factors involving reading appeal and literary quality are discussed in greater detail later in this chapter. As far as the criteria that they are readable, typical, and available, the following statements can be made about the novels recommended in this study:

1. The level of vocabulary and sentence structure is simple enough for the average junior high school student to comprehend readily, but the authors do not "talk down" to the reader.

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[3] Ibid., pp. 77-78.

[4] "The Junior Novel in the Classroom," p. 513.

2. The narrative style is relatively uncomplicated and is easy for the young adolescent reader to follow. If there is a shifting point of view, there are adequate signals to identify the speaker so that the inexperienced reader can avoid confusion.

3. None of the novels is unique in structure, style, or theme.

4. All of the novels are currently available from American publishers in inexpensive paperback editions.

Interest factors

If students are to respond fully to a novel, they must find it interesting and entertaining to read. The reading interests of adolescents have been discussed fully in Chapter II. The major findings of experts in the field may be summarized as follows:

1. Reading interests are determined primarily by age and sex.

2. Young readers like an obvious plot with physical action, conflict, and suspense. They do not like long narrative or descriptive passages.

3. Boys enjoy stories about animals, sports, cars, mystery, adventure, and science fiction.

4. Girls prefer stories of romance, mystery, and home and family life.

5. Girls enjoy boys' stories more than boys enjoy girls' stories.

6. Adolescents are interested in reading about other adolescents.

7. Adolescents read to find answers to personal problems and to learn what to expect from life.

A primary factor in selecting a novel for this study was that it be interesting reading for a teenager. Not every book in the recommended

list will appeal to every adolescent, but the range of books is broad enough that an individual reader should be able to find several which are especially appealing. Some of the books have a stronger appeal for girls than for boys, and others are more interesting to boys than to girls, but it is felt that most of these novels can be read with enjoyment by students of both sexes.

In determining whether a particular novel was of sufficient interest to the junior high school reading audience to be recommended for class study, the following criteria were considered:

1. The novel must be of a type which experts in the field of adolescent reading have determined that junior high school students like to read. The books fall into ten such categories: animal stories, tales of adventure, mysteries, science fiction, sports stories, car stories, romances, personal problem stories, social problem stories, and historical stories.

2. The novel must have sufficient action, conflict, and suspense to maintain the young reader's interest at a high pitch throughout the book. The conflict should be introduced early in the story, and the story should be brought to a swift conclusion once the conflict is resolved.

3. The action of the story should not be interrupted often with long descriptive passages.

4. Characters, events, and the view of life of the story should be within the young reader's ability to understand.

5. Where it is applicable, details of the story should be as contemporary and up-to-date as possible. If a story is supposed to be

about the life of a modern teenager, a 1950 setting is not effective for a 1970 reader.

6. If the novel deals with a problem which is real to the adolescent life, it should be a problem which is real to the adolescent of today. Some such problems are timeless; others are products of the time and society in which we live, and will change as society changes.

Literary factors

That a book is interesting to an adolescent is not in itself sufficient reason to adopt the book for class study. If the study of a novel is to help students to develop their reading skills and tastes, it must offer the readers a challenge and a recognizable standard of literary quality. There are many books which offer entertaining reading for the teenager and nothing more. The books discussed in this study were chosen to be not only enjoyable reading, but to be of sufficient literary value to merit class study.

In evaluating the literary quality of these adolescent novels, Stephen Dunning's excellent and fully detailed criteria were used.

Category 1: Style of the novel

A. The style is suitable for the thematic concerns.
B. The language of the conversations and descriptions creates a sense of reality.
C. The style is capable of contributing to the reader's esthetic appreciations. It has both clarity and beauty of expression.
D. The vocabulary and figurative language are generally effective rather than pedestrian.

Category 2: Structure of the novel

A. Structural aspects are developed clearly and logically.
B. The settings and backgrounds contribute to its effectiveness.

C. The plot manifests psychological, if not literal truth.
D. The structural concerns are so unified that nothing need be added nor deleted to give the reader a sense of satisfaction or completeness.
E. The plot has unique aspects; it avoids the characteristics of the trash novel (such as excessive coincidence).
F. The novel demonstrates mature techniques of narrative through use of parallelism, flashback, introspection, stream of consciousness, et cetera.

Category 3: Characterization in the novel

A. Character is thoroughly, rather than superficially delineated. It is developed in a variety of ways rather than merely established descriptively.
B. Conversations of the adolescent characters represent the adolescent idiom. All characters' conversations "ring true."
C. The main adolescent characters:
   (1) are made to live with the consequences of their decisions;
   (2) develop sequentially rather than spontaneously;
   (3) are adequately motivated in their behavior;
   (4) grow into an understanding of their capabilities and limitations;
   (5) are characterized rather than caricatured; and
   (6) react realistically to the situations which confront them.

Category 4: Theme of the novel

A. The theme offers adolescents some important perspective upon the nature of human experience.
B. The theme is treated seriously and respectfully.
C. The theme helps determine the structure of the novel yet does not dominate any single element.
D. The theme deals with an important adolescent need or developmental task and reflects values appropriate to our heritage.
E. Plot considerations supporting the theme are significant and believable. Problems reflecting the theme are solved believably rather than magically.

Category 5: Adult role and adult-adolescent relationships in the novel

A. Adult characters reflect an accurate round of adult life--its responsibilities, satisfactions, and problems.

B. Adult roles offer some indication of the responsibilities which accompany the freedoms of adulthood.
C. Adult characters react to adolescence in a fashion suggesting some understanding rather than tolerance.
D. Activities and characterizations of adults are representative rather than stereotyped.
E. Relationships between adults and adolescents are sensitively drawn. The two age groups are presented as fellow-members of a species, with common interests and problems.
F. Adolescents' perceptions of adult life are consistent with their perception of other things.[5]

Not every book on the list meets each of the criteria fully. But each of the recommended books stands up well against the requirements in each of the five categories. This writer feels that the strengths of these books on the basis of evaluation of interest level and literary quality make them suitable and desirable for class study in grades seven through nine.

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[5]Dissertation, pp. 126-128.

IV. A SELECTION OF NOVELS SUITABLE FOR CLASS STUDY IN JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL

In this chapter a number of novels are briefly described and discussed in terms of their appeal to junior high school readers and their suitability for class study. Each novel has been measured against the factors of reading interest and literary quality described in the previous chapter.

The selection of these novels was necessarily somewhat subjective in spite of the standards used, and the books recommended here are by no means all of the novels which might be valuable for study by a junior high school class. The list is intended to be representative of the best in the field of fiction for the young adolescent reader. Many excellent novels were considered but not included in the final selection because it was felt that their appeal was primarily to the older teenager, and therefore were more suitable for study in senior high school.

Other books which have been highly recommended by various authorities as being outstanding for the early adolescent were automatically excluded because they were not currently available in paperback editions. A few were omitted because they were so unusual in structure that they could not be considered of the novel genre.

For ease of reference, the book selections have been divided into ten major subject categories which research has indicated to be especially popular among teenagers. Several of the novels might well

be classified under more than one of the categories, depending on the kind of emphasis the teacher wishes for an individual class.

Of the ten categories--personal problems, social problems, adventure, historical stories, animal stories, sports stories, mysteries, science fiction, romance, and car stories--some are obviously more likely to receive time and attention in the literature class than others, and the number of books selected in each subject area reflects this consideration. Yet novels about subjects which English teachers often regard as being of lesser importance can have great significance for the teenager, and can be of special value for class study, particularly when students need extra interest incentive for reading.

Personal Problems

Novels about the personal problems of other adolescents are particularly relevant to teenage readers. The eight novels discussed in this section cover a wide range of problem areas, and all treat the problems seriously and realisticly. This group of novels is sufficiently varied in subject and level of reading ability that it should offer at least one appealing book to most junior high school students.

Mr. and Mrs. Bo Jo Jones

by Ann Head[1]

One very real problem which has long been considered taboo in fiction for adolescents is that of teenage pregnancy and marriage. Junior novels written in recent years are focusing more on such traditionally

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[1]Signet Books (New York: The New American Library, 1967).

forbidden subjects. Mr. and Mrs. Bo Jo Jones is an example of teenage fiction of this type.

July, sixteen, and Bo Jo, seventeen, think they have solved the problem of July's pregnancy when they get married, but they find that the demands of marriage are greater than either of them is prepared to face. Told from July's point of view, the story realistically describes the hardships and heartaches of a young couple forced too early into adulthood by a marriage of necessity. The only significant flaw in the novel is its simplistic fairy-tale ending, which contrasts greatly with what has gone before. In spite of this weakness, the book is a good one to recommend to more mature junior high school girls.

Another good book about the problems of teenage marriage is Dropout, by Jeannette Eyerly.[2] In this story pregnancy is not involved; rather, the young people seek escape from what they see as insufferable problems at home and in school.

My Darling, My Hamburger
by Paul Zindel[3]

This is the story of two teenage couples: Maggie and Dennis are shy and awkward, Liz and Sean are poised and popular, the envy of all the school. But this is no typically rosy teenage love story. Ignoring the traditional taboos for junior novels, Zindel focuses on the sexual problems of teenagers. Treating the subject delicately, yet realistically, he shows a deep understanding and compassion for their conflicting

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[2]Berkley Highland Books (New York: Berkley Publishing Corp., 1963).

[3](New York: Bantam Books, 1969).

desires, fears, and curiosity through events ranging from worry over a good-night kiss to illegal abortion.

Although likely to arouse controversy, this novel is an excellent treatment of a very real problem confronting some teenagers. Junior high school girls will find it especially significant and relevant reading, but it offers much that is worthwhile for boys as well.

Onion John

by Joseph Krumgold[4]

This Newbery Medal winner deals with two classic themes—conflict of goals between father and son, and the right of the individual to choose his own way to happiness.

Andy Rusch, Jr., does not realize the trouble that will result when he becomes Onion John's best friend. Onion John is an institution in the town of Serenity. He lives in a ramshackle house with four bathtubs and no running water. He speaks a strange mixture of English and a foreign language, and only Andy can understand him.

The problems begin with Andy's father, who wants his son to fulfill his lost dream of becoming an engineer, and who decides that the only way to protect Andy from the strange influence of Onion John is to make Onion John "normal." And to be so, he must have a proper house.

So Mr. Rusch sets off a chain of events, all based in good intentions, which destroys Onion John's happy way of life. When it seems that things have gone too far to be reversed, Mr. Rusch realizes his mistakes in trying to mold other people's lives—Andy's as well as

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[4](New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Co., 1959).

Onion John's--to conform to his own wishes. And Onion John helps Andy to understand his father.

This book is an excellent piece of fiction for the younger adolescent. Students above the eighth grade are likely to feel that it is somewhat childish for them.

The Nitty Gritty

by Frank Bonham[5]

Charlie Matthews feels trapped in the slum where he lives. He knows he must find a way to escape this way of life, but the problem is how to do it. Charlie's English teacher encourages him to stay in school, but his father wants him to devote all his time to shining shoes so that he can supplement the family's meager income. But Charlie figures out a plan of his own. By going into partnership with his Uncle Baron he can make money quickly and enjoy the same carefree life he thinks his uncle leads. Hard work, disappointment, and disillusionment leave Charlie wiser about human nature and how to achieve success in the real world.

This novel presents a realistic view of many aspects of the ghetto and its inhabitants. The characters are well developed, and the dialogue is true-to-life. The narrative style is distinguished by Bonham's careful mixture of third-person omniscient point of view with stream of consciousness accounts of Charlie's thoughts. It covers a wide range of human emotions, from the humor of the lady-bug hunt to Charlie's heartbreak over being abandoned in a crisis by Uncle Baron.

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[5]Laurel-Leaf Library (New York: Dell Publishing Co., Inc., 1968).

The Girl Inside

by Jeannette Eyerly[6]

"The music stopped" in Christina Frederickson's life when her mother died and she had to go to live with an aunt while her father established himself in a new job. But her father's death in an automobile accident is more than Christy can find strength to bear. Blaming herself for her father's death and finding no sympathy or understanding from her aunt, she attempts suicide.

The story follows Christy's struggle to find happiness and build a new life for herself. She moves in with a foster family and makes friends at her new school. But her improvement is superficial and very fragile. When tragedy strikes a third time she once again contemplates suicide. She is jolted into the realization that she has been acting like a frightened child, blind to the troubles of people around her. She learns that she has the inner strength to cope with her problems if she faces up to life in a mature fashion.

The Girl Inside is a sensitive psychological study which should hold a strong appeal for the more mature junior high girl. At an age when emotional reactions are so intense that even seemingly trivial incidents can loom as tragedies, teenagers may find much that is personally helpful in Christy's story.

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[6]Berkley Highland Books (New York: Berkley Publishing Corp., 1968).

Henry 3

by Joseph Krumgold[7]

This book probes the structure of the upper-middle class society at a depth rare among novels written for the adolescent reader. The setting is a well-to-do suburb of New York, populated by families of successful corporate executives. Even the children are concerned with upholding the proper image that will best serve the interests of their fathers' businesses.

Henry Lovering, III, or Henry 3, has suffered for lack of friends in every town in which he has lived, because of the stigma of his high IQ. Now that his father has been promoted to the home office, with a good chance to become vice-president, he knows that Crestview is his last chance--the family is here to stay.

Everything gets off to a good start for the Loverings in Crestview until they have to install a bomb shelter in their backyard as part of a research project for Mr. Lovering's company. The shelter alienates them from the community to such an extent that it seems that the only way Henry 3 can regain his social position is to find a way to prevent wars. He and another eighth-grade outcast, Fletcher Larkin, find a method, but the result of their efforts serves only to make trouble and to disillusion Henry about his father's character.

Strangely, a hurricane puts the Loverings back into the good graces of Crestview and reunites Henry 3 with his father. The disaster causes people to strip away their phony fronts and show themselves

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[7]Archway Paperbacks (New York: Washington Square Press, 1967).

as they really are. The experience teaches Henry 3 a valuable lesson about people, and results in a great alteration in his life and the lives of the Lovering family and Fletcher Larkin.

It would be difficult to find a more serious treatment of modern man's motivations and goals and how trouble causes them to change; yet the novel is written at a level capable junior high school students can understand and appreciate.

One of the remarkable attributes of the book is Krumgold's handling of adult characters. Far from being stereotypes, they are fully human portrayals, with all their strengths and failings. Likewise, Krumgold demonstrates a true understanding of the adolescent--his problems, his joys, and his recognition of the shortcomings of our society.

Why Not Join the Giraffes?

by Hope Campbell[8]

Like many teenage girls, Suzie Henderson has a problem with her family--they don't understand her. But it is not from a lack of love or because her parents are old-fashioned. Quite the contrary, they are too "with it" for Suzie's tastes. What Suzie longs for is a "normal" home with some peace and quiet.

The Henderson apartment is chaotic. Mr. Henderson writes scripts for television and his wife does the research and proofreading, so many of the household duties, including babysitting with her small brother, fall to Suzie. Her older brother Sam is a rock musician, complete with long hair and weird clothes.

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[8]Yearling Books (New York: Dell Publishing Co., Inc., 1968).

Suzie's attempts to lead a double life in an effort to make her new boy friend think she is an ordinary girl from a normal family will entertain and amuse the young adolescent girl. Through her experiences Suzie discovers talents she didn't know she had and learns respect for other members of her family.

The author treats Suzie's problems seriously, but with humor. The book is honest in its portrayal of teenagers as individuals with differing personalities and interests.

The Pigman

by Paul Zindel[9]

This unusual novel is the story of two lonely teenagers and their relationship with an equally lonely old man. It is told in retrospect, alternating between the two teenagers as they attempt to assess their responsibility for the old man's death.

The structure and subtlety of theme make The Pigman more difficult reading than the average junior novel, and it should be selected only for the more mature and capable junior high school students. Its sensitive and perceptive portrayal of the characters and its use of realistic teenage idiom give it a strong appeal. It is a thought-provoking novel, certainly worthy of class study.

Social Problems

During the past several years young people have become increasingly aware of and involved in social issues. Recent Junior novels

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[9]Laurel-Leaf Library (New York: Dell Publishing Co., 1968).

reflect this trend. As demonstrated by the eight novels recommended here, junior novels about social problems typically use an adolescent's viewpoint to show how young people are affected by problems in society or how they can contribute to the solution of such problems.

The majority of these books deal with the subject of racial discrimination. This is understandable considering the attention which has been focused on racial problems and civil rights issues in this country during the past decade, and the direct impact school desegregation has on young people.

Tuned Out

by Maia Wojciechowska[10]

Tuned Out treats the timeless theme of the struggle between good and evil for possession of man. The theme is given immediate relevance for today's teenagers in a story about drug dependence.

The narrative is given the form of a sixteen-year-old boy's journal. The long-awaited summer turns into a nightmare for Jim when his idolized older brother, Kevin, comes home from college, drastically changed by drugs. Their parents either cannot or refuse to recognize Kevin's problem, so Jim tackles it singlehanded.

This book vividly and realistically dramatizes the mental and emotional anguish of a young person attempting to save a loved one from destruction. It is a novel which should stimulate thoughtful class discussion among junior high school readers.

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[10]Laurel-Leaf Library (Dell Publishing Co., Inc., 1968).

The Outsiders

by S. E. Hinton[11]

This story is from the standp of the outsiders--the "greasers," poor kid ...gh neig ...d who are shunned by the middle class teenage... ...ne vein of Side Story, it demonstrates the way in which social class divisions turn into hate and violence.

The Outsiders is a remarkably pe...ve novel written by a teenage girl. The depths of character develop..., the realistic dialogue, the understanding of teenagers' problems, ... the exciting plot are among the features which qualify this book fo... high recommendation for class study in junior high school.

Another excellent novel by Miss ...ton is That Was Then, This Is Now.[12] Dealing somewhat more subtly w... a theme of personal jealousy and loyalty, it would also be an excel... book for class study by more mature adolescent readers.

The Learning Tree

by Gordon Parks[13]

The Learning Tree is an out...anding autobiographical novel by Gordon Parks, the renowned Negro photog...pher, composer, and writer. It tells the story of a young black growing to manhood and trying to adjust

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[11]Laurel-Leaf Library (Dell Publishing Co., Inc., 1967).

[12]Laurel-Leaf Library (Dell Publishing Co., Inc., 1971).

[13]Fawcett Crest Books (Greenwich, Conn.: Fawcett Publications, Inc., 1963).

without bitterness to a society in which the color of his skin is an automatic mark against him.

This novel cannot be too highly recommended for class study for more mature junior high school students. Covering a wide spectrum of characters, events, and human emotions, it has much to say about life and death that goes far beyond racial issues. The fast-paced plot is exciting, suspenseful, and often humorous, all features which heighten the book's appeal to adolescent readers.

Harlem Summer

by Mary Elizabeth Vroman[14]

Sixteen-year-old John Brown leaves his home in Montgomery, Alabama, to spend the summer with his aunt and uncle in Harlem. The people and their lifestyle are very different from those to which John is accustomed, and he finds that he has a lot to learn. His experience working in Sam Block's grocery store and his relationships with his new friends, Mark II, Deena, and Old Paul, as well as his aunt and uncle, help him In his search for identity as a man and a black.

This novel, definitely juvenile in style and scope, nonetheless offers perceptive insights into some aspects of the racial conflict in our society. The characters illustrate a wide range of the black man's responses and attitudes toward his struggle for equality.

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[14]Berkley Highland Books (New York: Berkley Publishing Corp., 1967).

Edgar Allan

by John Neufield[15]

This is the deeply moving story of a white family who adopts a black child. The story is told simply and without sentiment from the point of view of Michael, a twelve-year-old boy. His perceptive and matter-of-fact account of what happens in their family and community when his mother and father try to adopt a black child produces an acute and well-defined picture of what prejudice really is. From his experience during Edgar Allan's brief stay in their home, Michael learns a great deal about human nature—that those you love and trust sometimes succumb to weakness, but there is hope for man to become more tolerant.

Edgar Allan is a beautiful book. It is presented simply enough for the young reader to understand, yet its lessons about life are valuable for people of all ages.

Sounder

by William H. Armstrong[16]

This Newbery Award winner is somewhat difficult to classify by subject. In one sense it is an animal story, though it is mainly the story of the personal and family problems of a young boy growing to manhood; but the source of the problems is the racially prejudiced society in which the boy lives.

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[15]Signet Books (New York: The New American Library, 1968).

[16]Harper Trophy Books (New York: Harper & Row, 1969).

Faced with the likelihood of starvation for his wife and children, a Negro sharecropper steals a ham. He is brutally treated by the men who arrest him, and his hunting dog, Sounder, is seriously wounded. The story revolves around the boy's search for his imprisoned father.

This masterfully written novel cannot be too highly recommended for study by mature junior high school students. Armstrong's thematic device of naming only the dog, and the well-handled symbolism of the dog waiting for his master's return are elements for study to help students prepare for reading more mature fiction.

Jazz Country

by Nat Hentoff[17]

Jazz Country treats the problem of racial discrimination in reverse. It is the story of a young white musician trying to gain acceptance into the predominantly black world of jazz. In the process he must find a more mature understanding of himself, other people, and his music.

A realistic and dramatic story, this novel offers enjoyable and thoughtful reading for the junior high school student.

Another excellent book by Hentoff is I'm Really Dragged But Nothing Gets Me Down.[18] It is the story of a teenage boy coming to grips with his own conscience over such current social problems as drugs, race, and the draft. It should make immediately relevant reading for the older adolescent.

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[17]Laurel-Leaf Library (New York: Dell Publishing Co., Inc., 1965).

[18]Laurel-Leaf Library (New York: Dell Publishing Co., Inc., 1968).

My Enemy, My Brother

by James Forman[19]

With Arab-Israeli unrest so much in the world news today, My Enemy, My Brother is an especially valuable novel for helping today's teenagers to understand the events during and after World War II which led to today's situation.

This book is the story of Daniel Baratz, a teenage survivor of Nazi concentration camps, who leaves Poland after the war with a group of other young Jews to walk to Italy and find passage from there to Palestine. After much hardship, Dan and two others reach their destination, a kibbutz called Promise of the Future. But happiness is not so easily attained. Dan must face war, compromise of his principles, and betrayal of trust to his Arab friend.

Although told from the standpoint of the Jews who formed the modern state of Israel, this novel is objective in presenting the atrocities committed against both the Arabs and the Jews. Rather than trying to offer a solution to the problem, the book merely examines the conditions underlying the bitterness and hostility that is still so strong today.

My Enemy, My Brother is more difficult reading than the typical junior novel, and is most suitable for study by older and academically capable junior high school students.

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[19](New York: Scholastic Book Services, 1969).

Adventure

According to Dwight Burton, adventure stories help the adolescent to satisfy his need to test himself, to know if he will measure up to the demands life may make on him. The best adventure stories not only offer danger and excitement, but "rise to a level at which the hero's understandings--and perhaps those of the reader--are enlarged and his attitudes modified as a result of his experience."[20]

The conflict in adventure stories for adolescents frequently is based on man's struggle for survival against the harsh forces of nature. Even when war or dangerous people provide the main threat, natural hazards often add to the suspense, as with the cave episode in Tom Sawyer, the snake pit in True Grit, and the lagoon in Up Periscope.

The Adventures of Tom Sawyer
by Mark Twain[21]

In selecting literature for study in junior high school it would be a serious oversight to omit Mark Twain's classic tale of humor and adventure. This work is much more suitable for the young adolescent reader than is Huckleberry Finn, which requires more mature reading skills and understanding.

Although they may require occasional assistance with vocabulary, junior high school readers should find this novel highly entertaining reading. It can also serve as an introduction to one of America's

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[20] Literature Study in the High Schools, p. 258.

[21] Laurel-Leaf Library (New York: Dell Publishing Co., Inc.).

widely acclaimed authors, and as testimony to the fact that a novel written in the previous century can still provide enjoyable reading today.

Swiftwater

by Paul Annixter[22]

This exciting outdoor story tells of a young boy pushed into early manhood by his father's injury, hunting and trapping during the harsh Maine winter for his family's livelihood, and searching for the answer to his and his father's dream of providing a refuge for the wild geese.

The well-developed backwoods characters and the exciting and suspenseful adventure of Bucky's trips to the deep woods make this novel highly entertaining for the adolescent reader. Mainly a boys' book, the details of frontier home life and romantic interest are elements which should make it appealing to many girls as well.

True Grit

by Charles Portis[23]

This delightful bestseller about a fourteen-year-old girl who hires a gunman to help her track her father's killer into the badlands has appeal for readers of all ages. In addition to exciting and often hilarious reading, it offers excellent opportunity for studying tone and point of view. Even though the main character is a girl, the nature of the story is such that boys should enjoy it as much as girls will.

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[22](New York: Scholastic Book Services, 1950).

[23]Signet Books (New York: The New American Library, 1968).

Banner in the Sky

by James Ramsey Ullman[24]

Sixteen-year old Rudi Matt dreams of conquering the Citadel, the seemingly unclimbable mountain on which his father, one of the greatest of all the Swiss guides, lost his life. But his mother and his uncle are opposed to his becoming a guide, and have apprenticed him to a hotel owner. There seems to be no opportunity for a mountain-climbing life for Rudi until he captures the interest of Captain John Winter, a famous English mountaineer.

The story follows Rudi's struggles, triumphs, and defeats as he tries to prove himself as a man and a guide. It dramatizes the compulsion which drives men to do something no man has done before. Based in part on the first climbing of the Matterhorn, the details of the mountains and the men who climb them are vivid and realistic.

Banner in the Sky offers exciting reading for the junior high school student.

White Water, Still Water

by J. Allan Bosworth[25]

This novel treats the traditional theme of man's survival against the harsh elements of nature. Thirteen-year-old Chris Holm lives in the wilderness of the Northwest, but to his father's dismay, he is not interested in hunting or woodsmanship. Chris is a dreamer, and the focus of

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[24]Archway Paperbacks (New York: Washington Square Press, 1954).

[25]Archway Paperbacks (New York: Washington Square Press, 1966).

his dreams is the river, which he knows flows to the ocean past large cities he has never seen. Unknown to his parents, Chris has built a raft on which he pretends he is journeying down the river to all those places he dreams of.

One day Chris falls asleep on the raft, and it breaks loose and is caught in the river current. He is at first afraid to jump, and then unable to. Before he abandons the raft he has been swept almost one hundred miles downstream.

Scantily clad and with only a pocket knife as a tool, Chris must learn to survive in the wilderness and must follow the river upstream to his home before the approaching winter sets in. He has little skill against the forces of nature, but his instinct for survival is strong, and he gradually overcomes obstacle after obstacle, until he finally reaches safety.

White Water, Still Water is exciting adventure for the young adolescent reader. The author's style in describing the beautiful but rugged country is good, and he maintains an almost unbroken tension as Chris faces one problem after another.

Up Periscope

by Robb White[26]

Lieutenant (j.g.) Kenneth M. Brader has agreed to undertake a dangerous secret mission for the Navy in the Pacific in World War II. His assignment is to locate the code being used for Japanese intelligence transmissions from a group of islands deep in enemy waters. But the

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[26](New York: Scholastic Book Services, 1956).

mission and Ken seem to be doomed from the beginning by the lack of cooperation from the commander of the Shark, the submarine assigned to take Ken to the islands.

After a refueling stop at Midway, the Shark is attacked by a Japanese plane. Before orders can be given to dive, the deck is strafed, and the captain and two other officers are wounded. All but the mortally wounded captain make it to safety, and in a final act of courage, he orders the ship to submerge, leaving himself trapped on deck.

Part of Ken's problem is solved when the acting skipper agrees to take the risk necessary to enable Ken to carry out his mission. But there are many dangers left for Ken and the Shark's crew before they return to Pearl Harbor.

This tense and thrilling novel should make interesting reading for the junior high school student. It also offers significant consideration to the differences between fear and cowardice as well as between bravery and foolhardiness.

Animal Stories

Animal stories are extremely popular with early adolescents. There is a wide range of literary quality among novels about animals, and the better ones can offer excellent material for class study in junior high school. The four discussed in this section are among the better novels of this type.

Old Yeller

by Fred Gipson[27]

This heartwarming story has become something of a classic among readers of all ages. Gipson's skillful juxtaposition of danger and humor, his realistic frontier dialogue, and his life-like characters give this novel a literary quality unusual in animal stories.

Old Yeller is not just a simple story of a boy and his dog. It is the story of life on the frontier, where a boy must become a man at an early age, and where a dog must be more than a pet. The details of the lifestyle are vivid, and Gipson's use of foreshadowing makes the dangers which threaten the family entirely believable.

Another novel by Gipson is Savage Sam,[28] which is about the same characters and the son of Old Yeller. In this exciting adventure, Travis, Lisbeth, and Arliss are kidnapped by Indians, and by bringing about their rescue, Savage Sam shows that he has inherited his father's courage and tenacity.

The Incredible Journey

by Sheila Burnford[29]

In this novel Sheila Burnford demonstrates a perceptive love and understanding of animals. The main characters--a Siamese cat, an old English bull terrier, and a Labrador retriever--are as fully developed as the human characters in most books.

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[27]Perennial Library (New York: Harper & Row, 1956).

[28](New York: Pocket Books, 1962).

[29]Bantam Pathfinder Editions (New York: Bantam Books, 1961).

The story is an account of the trio's trek through the Canadian wilderness to find their home and family. They encounter many kinds of danger, but their devotion to each other and the compelling nature of their journey help them to survive.

Although The Incredible Journey will probably strike most adult readers as highly sentimental, young junior high school students are more likely to view it as an exciting and emotion-packed story of loyalty and determination.

The Green Grass of Wyoming
by Mary O'Hara[30]

Ken McLaughlin's well-ordered ranch life is suddenly disrupted when his wild stallion, Thunderhead, breaks out of his valley enclosure and begins stealing mares from all over the countryside. A very valuable racehorse is among them. The plot revolves around the search for the horses, Ken's romantic involvement with the girl who owns the racehorse, and Ken's conflict with his father over what should be done with the stallion when he is found. The events of the story hasten Ken's growing from a boy to a man, and his increased maturity helps to bring the story to a happy conclusion.

Mary O'Hara is a skillful writer, developing her characters dramatically and portraying a realistic view of the day-to-day problems on a ranch. Her descriptions of the Wyoming scenery are told vividly and in beautiful language. But the most distinguishing feature of the novel is her treatment of the horses. They are as real and as individual as the

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[30]Laurel-Leaf Library (New York: Dell Publishing Co., Inc., 1946).

people of the story, and their courage and tenacity in the face of hardship and danger are beautifully dramatized.

This novel is more complex in its view of life than most adolescent literature, and while it is not difficult reading, it will probably be better appreciated by the older and more mature junior high school student.

The Call of the Wild
by Jack London[31]

Jack London's near-classic novel about Buck, whose experiences as a sled dog in the Klondike arouse the primordial call of his heritage, can serve as valuable study material for the junior high school class in the latter part of the transition stage between unconscious and self-conscious enjoyment of reading. More demanding of the basic reading skills than other animal stories discussed in this study, it is a simply told story with strong elements of appeal for the teenage reader.

Historical Novels

Good historical novels can be valuable in the literature program if they are used as literature and not as mere accounts of events that occurred in the past. The two recommended here are outstanding novels for the adolescent reader set in periods of historical importance in this country's history.

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[31](New York: Scholastic Book Services, 1963).

Johnny Tremain

by Esther Forbes[32]

This Newbery Award-winning novel has justifiably become something of a classic in adolescent fiction. Told with historical accuracy, it is the story of a boy living in Boston at the time of the outbreak of the Revolutionary War. But like all good historical novels, it is more than just a fictionalized account of events in the past. It is about a teen-age boy searching for his identity, handicapped physically by a crippled hand and emotionally by his intense pride.

A skillfully written book, it dramatizes the life and spirit of the Revolutionary period in a way few textbooks can hope to achieve. It emphasizes the similarities rather than the differences between teenagers and adults of all times. Johnny Tremain certainly should not be over-looked when selecting novels for class study in junior high school.

Across Five Aprils

by Irene Hunt[33]

The title of this novel alludes to the five years of the Civil War, from April, 1861, to April, 1865. The story is about the repercussions of the war on the Creighton family in Southern Illinois, and particularly on young Jethro. Based on the life of the author's grandfather and his family, the novel is extremely true-to-life, and encompasses the entire range of human tragedy and emotion inflicted by a torn and warring nation.

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[32]Yearling Books (New York: Dell Publishing Co., Inc., 1943).

[33]Tempo Books (New York: Grosset and Dunlap, 1964).

The narrative is omniscient, but the view of life is Jethro's, who is nine at the outbreak of the war. Talk of the inevitability of war has been going on for some time, and some of Jethro's older brothers are eager for the war to start. They think it will be over in a matter of weeks.

Although the Creightons were originally from Kentucky and have relatives who are strongly in favor of secession, they are sympathetic to the side of the Union--all but Bill, Jethro's favorite brother, who makes an agonizing decision to fight for the Confederacy. His other two brothers, a cousin who lives with the Creightons, and the school teacher who is in love with Jethro's sister join the Union Army.

Although Jethro does not experience any of the actual warfare firsthand, he learns of the horrors of battle from the letters of his brothers. He is shocked and confused by the way people vilify Lincoln and Grant for their conduct of the war, and by the violence displayed by critics of his family when they refused to disown Bill for fighting with the Confederacy. The hardships endured by his family push Jethro into manhood.

This is an excellent novel for adolescent readers. All of the characters, even those who play the most minor roles, come to life as fully rounded, believable people. The details of the war, the attitudes of the people and lifestyle of the region are historically accurate. The pace of the book is fast and exciting, and it has elements which should appeal to almost every junior high school student.

Science Fiction

Good science fiction can not only satisfy a reader's delight with fantasy, it can offer a penetrating insight into human nature and sociological trends. Today there is a wide range of good science fiction by authors of recognized literary skill. Many of the better science fiction writers such as Robert Heinlein write novels particularly suited for the young adolescent reader.

The Guardians

by John Christopher[34]

The setting for The Guardians is England in the twenty-first century. The strictly controlled society is divided into the Conurb, a huge megalopolis where life revolves around electronic technology, and the County, where rural life exists much as it was in the nineteenth century.

When Rob Randall, a Conurban boy, is left an orphan after the mysterious death of his father, he is sent to a harsh boarding school. The only hope for escape is to cross the forbidden barrier into the County. Rob manages to make his escape, and he is taken in by a County family. He learns some horrifying secrets about the society in which he lives, and the nature of true freedom.

This well-written novel is tense and exciting reading. The characterization is good, and the theme of man's desire for individual freedom is compelling.

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[34](New York: Collier Books, 1970).

The Rolling Stones

by Robert A. Heinlein[35]

This delightful novel is about the space odyssey of the Stone family, who overhaul a used rocket and leave their home on the moon to see the sights in outer space. They are an unusual and brilliant group: Roger Stone is an engineer who moonlights as a scriptwriter for an earth television series; his wife, Edith, is a doctor; the twin boys, Castor and Pollux, are teenage geniuses and "con" artists; their older sister Meade is equally intelligent, though more nearly "normal;" four-year-old Lowell is a chess expert; and Grandmother Hazel, one of the original moon pioneers, is the most adventurous of the lot. Their adventures are sometimes dangerous and often hilarious.

This book is strictly for enjoyment, and it succeeds well. As usual, Heinlein's knowledge of space contributes a semblance of reality. His characterization and the bantering dialogue carried on by the family members are excellent.

Mystery

That early adolescents find great enjoyment in reading mysteries is demonstrated by their continuing interest in the Hardy Boys and Nancy Drew stories. It is more difficult to find quality mystery novels for this age group. The two discussed here are among the few which offer sufficient literary substance for class study.

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[35](New York: Ace Books, 1952).

Deathman, Do Not Follow Me

by Jay Bennett[36]

This novel is an unusual departure from the standard teenage detective type of mystery story. The mystery involves the theft of a very valuable Van Gogh from the Brooklyn museum. Danny Morgan, a high school football star, is the only one other than the thieves who realizes that the painting hanging in the museum is not the original.

The suspense of the book is not based on finding out what has happened to the painting, but rather on the aura of evil which surrounds Danny and from which he doesn't know how to escape. The psychological conflict revolves around Danny's almost spiritual experience with the painting and his relationship with a strange and mysterious teacher.

Deathman, Do Not Follow Me should inspire a variety of discussion topics among the more mature junior high school reading audience, ranging from the meaning of art to the problems of finding personal identity. Don McLean's recent hit song "Vincent" could be used in conjunction with this book to help students understand Danny's reaction to the painting.

How Many Miles to Babylon?

by Paula Fox[37]

To escape the harsh realities of ghetto life in Brooklyn, ten-year-old James Douglas creates an imaginary world for himself in an abandoned house where he pretends to be an African prince. But one day his dream

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[36](New York: Scholastic Book Services, 1968).

[37]Archway Paperbacks (New York: Washington Square Press, 1967).

world is shattered when a gang of teenage dog thieves take over the house, kidnapping James and forcing him to cooperate with them. After a day and night of terror, James musters his courage in a daring escape.

How Many Miles to Babylon? is an exciting and suspenseful junior novel with a sensitive portrayal of a child's dreams and fears. The novel's only significant weakness is the sentimental and highly coincidental return of James' mother from a mental institution at the conclusion of the story. Otherwise it offers excellent and entertaining reading for a junior high school class.

Romance

Just as they will later enjoy Jane Eyre and Wuthering Heights, junior high school girls like to read romances. For purposes of group study in class, these need not be the trite little books so often thought of as representing the junior novel. The two novels recommended here are examples of the better quality of adolescent romances which provide interest and study material for the teenage girl.

Dave's Song
by Robert McKay[38]

Dave's Song is more than a teenage love story. It is the story of three young people on the brink of adulthood, who must determine their values and direction in life.

Kate Adams can't wait until she finishes high school and leaves the small town where she grew up for a more exciting life in a big

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[38]Bantam Pathfinder Editions (New York: Bantam Books, Inc., 1969).

city. In the meantime she enjoys the attentions of the most glamorous boy in town, Mal Reed, son of the department store owner, whose money, smart clothes, and flashy car represent the kind of things Kate wants.

Kate begins to question her values as she becomes involved with Dave Durdick, a strange young man whose all-consuming passion for breeding chickens has made him something of a social outcast among the other teenagers. Kate's original fear of him gradually changes to interest, admiration, and attraction as she comes to understand him.

The novel is well written, using shifting points of view to show Kate's and Dave's reactions to the events around them. The social problems they encounter and the realistic view of the process of establishing mature values give this novel considerably more substance than the typical junior novel romance. It should make entertaining and worthwhile reading for the more mature junior high school girl.

A Question of Pride
by Frederick Laing[39]

This novel explores the relationship between Lisa Hawley and Larry Elkins, first from Lisa's point of view and then from Larry's. Both are rather special young people—Lisa quiet, thoughtful, and understanding; Larry extraordinarily talented in music, but afraid to share his dreams and ambitions.

Lisa and Larry fall in love while they are in high school, before Larry becomes a popular recording star. The story tells how misunderstanding and pride almost destroy their relationship.

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[39](New York: Scholastic Book Services, 1967).

A Question of Pride is unusual for an adolescent romance in that it offers no simple answers to finding love and happiness, and it avoids the trite and trivial elements common to most books of this type. Junior high school boys generally dislike romances, but girls should enjoy this one.

Sports Stories

Often the literature teacher faces the problem of finding books which truly arouse the interests of junior high school boys. Sports stories can be of great value in filling this need. Two of the three novels described here have elements which should make them appealing to girls as well as to boys.

Chicano Cruz

by William Cox[40]

This baseball story has unusual depth of insight into character and personal problems not found in many teenage sports stories. The main character is Mando Cruz, who leaves college for professional baseball when his father breaks a leg and is unable to work. His best friend and teammate is Jack Kelly, from an unhappy upper-middle class family. The two become closely involved with their roommates, Sandy Roosevelt, a bitter and resentful black, and Gil Jones, son of a prominent and wealthy family who is trying to make it on his own.

These four young men all have personal problems which they must resolve, at the same time trying to make it in professional baseball.

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[40](New York: Bantam Books, 1972).

They have followed their coach, Harry Hammer, to a position at the bottom of the minor league heap, where he has been given an opportunity to prove himself as a manager, and they must prove themselves ready for the major leagues.

This novel with its vivid play-by-play game action and its unglamorous account of life in the minor leagues should provide entertaining reading for teenage boys. Yet the romantic interest and the treatment of personal and family problems should make it appealing for girls as well.

The Contender

by Robert Lipsyte[41]

Life seems to hold little opportunity for Alfred Brooks. Poor, black, orphaned, and a high school dropout, the best job he can find is unloading crates and sweeping up in a Jewish delicatesses. His closest friend has fallen in with a gang of toughs, thieves, and junkies, and Alfred is plagued by other street youths for being "whitey's slave." But Alfred still dreams of being "somebody," so when the pressures threatening him reach a peak, he goes to Donatelli's gym to train as a boxer.

The life of an amateur boxer trying to gain recognition and the opportunity to go professional is one of hard work, discipline, physical pain, and mental agony. But Alfred sticks with it, and proves himself to be a real contender, not for a boxing championship, but in life.

Girls will not find this novel particularly enjoyable, but its theme of self-determination set against the realistic and unglamorous sports background should be appealing to most boys, especially blacks.

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[41](New York: Bantam Books, 1967).

Go, Team, Go!

by John R. Tunis[42]

Like other junior sports fiction by John Tunis, Go, Team, Go! has somewhat more substance to it than most books of this type. It deals with the themes of maturity, responsibility, and fair-mindedness in an interesting plot about high school championship basketball. Its didacticism is minimized in that the moral sentiments are dramatized rather than preached. The characters, both teenagers and adults, are well developed, and the game action is vivid.

The only aspect of the book which might weaken its appeal to today's teenagers is that some of the specifics are out-of-date by current standards. For example, cheerleaders are called "yell leaders," boys have crew cuts and wear caps with ear flaps, and six feet four inches is considered quite tall for a basketball player. But the issues of the story are still quite contemporary, and if the teacher can help students to overlook the outmoded superficial details, Go, Team, Go! should offer rewarding reading to the junior high class, particularly to boys who are less than enthusiastic about books in general.

Car Stories

Another type of novel which can be particularly helpful in stirring the reading interests of junior high school boys is the car story. Yet research of adolescent literature for this study indicates a shortage of good contemporary car stories available in paperback editions.

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[42](New York: Scholastic Book Services, 1954).

Street Rod

by Henry Gregor Felsen[43]

Probably the best car stories for teenagers are those by Henry Gregor Felsen. A good example is Street Rod, a story of a teenager's desire to own a car and his fascination with speed. The exciting plot combines underlying themes of social conflict and developing maturity to create an appealing story for boys and many girls as well. The novel demonstrates a true understanding of the teenager's outlook on life and his relationships with both peers and adults.

Unfortunately the details of Felsen's books are somewhat passe for today's teenagers. Detroit muscle cars, foreign sports cars, and dune buggies have taken the place of the hot rods of which Felsen wrote. But the problems associated with a teenager's ownership of a car have remained much the same, so if students are encouraged to overlook the out-of-date details, Street Rod can offer entertaining and profitable reading to the junior high school class.

Another novel by Felsen, with similar strengths and weaknesses for the contemporary reader is Hot Rod.[44]

Think Wild!

by Arnold Madison

Think Wild! is typical of one of the common trends in junior novels written during the past ten years in that it combines one of the

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[43]Bantam Pathfinder Editions (New York: Bantam Books, 1953).

[44]Bantam Pathfinder Editions (New York: Bantam Books, 1950).

[45]Archway Paperbacks (New York: Washington Square Press, 1968).

traditional themes of adolescent fiction--a teenage boy's conflict with his parents over owning a car--with a treatment of related social conflicts which have involved many people in recent years.

The protagonist, Ted Alford, feels socially handicapped without a car. He figures out a scheme by which he can afford to buy a junk car and fix it up with the assistance of his mechanically talented friend, Jeff. He buys the car and the boys start to work on it, but Ted's behavior demonstrates that he is not truly mature enough to be responsible for a car.

Matters become more complicated when a right-wing group organizes in response to a teenage riot. Led by Oscar Jenks, a friend of Ted's parents, the group proposes to crack down on teenagers in a variety of ways, including severe restrictions on teenage drivers. Ted's chances of being able to drive his car once it will run are seriously threatened. Because of pressures resulting from tensions in the community and threats to their own family stability, Ted and his parents are pushed toward extremes. Mr. and Mrs. Alford join the right-wing group, and Ted participates in senseless and destructive retribution against Mr. Jenks.

But Ted, trying to establish a relationship with a girl, becomes involved in a youth group which shows him how to take meaningful social action without violence or further intensifying community reaction. The influence of the pastor who directs the group and one of his teachers helps Ted to understand the forces at work in the community, and he learns to handle personal and social problems in a more mature and stable manner. Fortunately, Mr. and Mrs. Alford are basically

moderate people, and they don't want to be involved in anything radical. The story concludes with the family united in an effort on the side of moderation, and of course Ted resolves his conflicts with his father over the car.

The style, characterization, and theme of Think Wild! are not exceptional in any way, but they are adequate to make this novel entertaining, particularly for the junior high school boy interested in cars. The overriding social theme provides more "meat" for class discussion than the typical car story. While Madison does not demonstrate any great literary skill, he does seem to understand teenagers' problems and view of life.

V. SUMMARY AND SUGGESTIONS FOR TEACHERS

Summary

It may be stated that one of the major goals of teaching literature is to produce students who find pleasure and satisfaction in reading and who are equipped with the skills necessary for reading a wide range of literature on their own. If this goal is to be achieved with a greater degree of success than in the past, the traditional literature program of the secondary schools requires some significant changes. Many authorities in the field of teaching of literature feel that the aspect of the curriculum in greatest need of change is the selection of works for class study.

There is much to indicate that the materials which have traditionally constituted a major part of the literature curriculum in themselves contribute to the defeat of the goals of the literature program. Since students are not mature readers, they are seldom prepared to read and appreciate the time-honored works of great literature. Rather than forcing students to read far beyond their level, thereby diminishing their interest in reading, the teacher of literature at the secondary school level should concentrate on helping students to develop more mature reading skills and tastes.

In selecting a work for literature study, prime consideration should be given to the degree of enjoyment students will receive from their

reading. Students are not likely to enjoy a book if it does not appeal to their interests or if the skills required for a full reading experience are excessively beyond their present level of development. Challenge stimulates growth, but the challenge must be confined to limits which students can reasonably be expected to meet.

The development of reading maturity is a gradual and sequential process which the literature program should follow. The junior high school grades are especially important since those are the years when students are in the transition phase between a child's unconscious delight with reading and the more mature stage of conscious enjoyment. The skills introduced at this level should serve as a basis for later study, but the main emphasis should be on the pleasures of reading.

Adolescents like to read books about other adolescents. They like themes which are immediately relevant to their own lives and problems. Animal stories, adventures, mysteries, science fiction, and sports stories; car stories, romances, personal and social problem stories, and historical stories are categories which research has shown to be very popular among teenage readers.

In spite of adverse criticism directed at novels written especially for adolescents, there is a significant body of adolescent literature which both appeals to teenage reading interests and is of sufficient literary quality to merit class study. Many authorities, among them Dwight Burton, Robert Carlsen, Dorothy Petitt, and Stephen Dunning, highly recommend the incorporation of such books into the literature curriculum. The novels discussed in the previous chapter are representative of adolescent literature suitable for class study in junior high school.

Suggestions for Teachers

In addition to the recommendations presented in this thesis concerning the objectives of the literature program and the selection of novels for class study in junior high school, some further suggestions may be offered to the English teacher who wants to become more familiar with adolescent literature.

Because junior high school students demand immediate relevance from their reading, it is important that books about contemporary social problems and adolescent life be as up-to-date as possible. Therefore the list of books selected for class study requires frequent examination and revision. With the large number of new junior novels published every year, this should not be a difficult task for the teacher who keeps up with the new publications. Several popular and professional journals review adolescent literature on a regular basis. Two which are likely to be readily available to most teachers and which also provide the most thorough discussions of these books are The English Journal and The School Library Journal.

Most of the better novels appear in paperback edition within two years of their original publication. Many of the major paperback publishers provide catalogs of their adolescent literature, and some offer special discounts for school orders.

Because of differences in reading interests of students, especially the sometimes wide divergence between boys and girls, it is not always possible to select one book which will have a strong appeal for all the students in a class. The same is also true in a class with a wide range

of ability levels. The junior novel makes it easier for the English teacher to reduce such problems. Since the vast majority of junior novels are comparatively short, rarely more than two hundred pages, the teacher can occasionally offer a choice of two or three novels for study by groups of students without greatly increasing his own work load.

A warning about teaching methods needs to be given and emphasized. Whatever work is selected for study, its appeal to adolescents will be greatly diminished if it is over-analyzed or if too long a period of time is devoted to discussion of it. The study of a novel at the junior high school level should not be an attempt to point out every feature of the genre or a lesson in all the reading skills to be developed in the secondary school years.

An appropriate selection of reading materials in conjunction with suitable teaching methods should result in a more enjoyable and more successful literature program.

Suggestions for Further Research

The findings of this study point out the need for further research into various aspects of adolescents' reading habits and interests. The most in-depth study of this subject was conducted more than twenty years ago by George W. Norvell.[1] While it still offers much valuable insight into the reading interests of young people, an up-to-date survey of the same scope might add greater enlightenment.

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[1] The Reading Interests of Young People (Boston: D. C. Heath and Co., 1950).

One possible benefit of such a study might be the revelation of changes in reading habits and interests of adolescents that may have taken place in the more than twenty years since Norvell's findings were published.

Up-to-date research could more accurately measure the impact of television and other modern leisure pursuits on teenagers' reading. Likewise, the influence of current "realistic" junior novels could be evaluated. Some of Norvell's findings merit further examination, especially in light of certain important social issues. For example, the women's rights movement has opened up a new perspective on previously unquestioned sexual differences. No longer can we accept as absolute fact that certain abilities or interests are restricted to members of one sex. The question of society's influence in determining the roles of the sexes might well be applied to Norvell's findings on sexual differences in reading interests of teenagers. To what extent are these differences due to the physiological impact of puberty, and to what extent are they due to social pressure for boys to fit into certain roles and girls into others?

Future research into reading characteristics of young people could provide important information that would assist in the development of relevant, interesting, and productive literature programs. But application of the findings of existing research would result in a marked improvement in the success of the literature curriculum.

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